ADULT LEARNING IN SELF-IDENTIFIED, SUCCESSFUL, SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGES

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BUILDING A HOUSE AS METAPHOR

Introduction

An old jump-rope rhyme declared, "First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Mary with a baby carriage." Today, a likely sequel to the traditional rhyme is that Mary and John divorce two or three years after having the baby (Kornblum & Julian, 1995). John moves in with Sally and her two boys. The baby stays with Mary who marries Jack who is divorced and has three children. Before being old enough to know what is happening, the baby has a family composed of a mother, a father, a stepfather, a stepmother, five stepbrothers and sisters, and four sets of both step and biological grandparents (p. 350).

All but unheard of in the 19th century and still rare before World War I, divorce and remarriage have become commonplace in American society (Kornblum & Julian, 1995, p. 360). From the early 1930s until the late 1950s, divorce rates in the United States were consistent at about 1.3 per 1,000 population (Statistical Abstract, 1993). As late as 1966, the divorce rate was still only 2.5 per 1,000

population, but in 1991 half as many couples got divorced as married representing a divorce rate of 4.7 per 1,000 (Statistical Abstract, 1995). Moreover, the divorce ratio, defined as the number of currently divorced persons per 1,000 currently married persons who live with their spouses, has more than tripled since 1960. There is nearly one divorce for every two marriages (U.S. Census Data, Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 1996). More than 40% of U.S. marriages now involve at least one spouse who has been married at least once before (Kate, 1996, p. 38). Furthermore, remarriage is still a popular choice among those couples who have experienced divorce for the first time (Rybash, Roodin, & Hoyer, 1995). Approximately 80% of all divorced people decide to remarry; of these remarriages, 60% will end in divorce versus a 50% rate of divorce for first marriages. Second marriages are highly complex, with excess baggage such as his and her children, lowered income due to alimony and child support, and the ghost of a failed marriage (p. 225).

The American Family

Family Life Changes

There are many forces putting pressure on marriage (Macionis, 1996). Most frequently cited is the change from

extended to nuclear families. Another factor is the extent to which functions that were formerly performed by the family have been assumed by outside agencies. Still other factors are the relaxation of attitudes regarding divorce and the changes in divorce laws so that they are easier to obtain. In addition, a growing number of educated women earn a living independently of their husbands (pp. 309-310).

The change to a smaller family unit along with the mobility of many modern families places more responsibility on a husband and wife to satisfy each other's emotional needs (Kornblum & Julian, 1995). At one time, married couples could turn to relatives or long-term neighbors for companionship. Today, spouses are more dependent on each other for these needs (p. 362).

The decrease in family size has been accompanied by a decrease in functions performed by families (Kiniston, 1955). Food production, education, entertainment, and other activities that were once centered in the home are now performed by outside agencies (p. 21).

Most sociologists agree that the movement of women out of the home and into the labor force is one of the most important social trends of the second half of the twentieth century (Kornblum & Julian, 1995). It caused an upheaval in

traditional male and female roles within the family as well as in other social institutions as couples struggle to balance the demands of work and family life (p. 355). One of the problems created by the high divorce rate is that the other institutions of society such as schools, economic institutions, and churches remain geared to the traditional family. These institutions are under pressure to adapt to the needs of single people and single parent families by providing care for children of working parents, more flexible working hours, and more welfare services (p. 356).

In the traditional concept of the American family, the husband worked in the paid labor force while the wife worked unpaid at home (Kornblum & Julian, 1995). In 1960, about 60% of American families still followed this model. By 1992 only about 20% did. What was the accepted norm for generations has become an exception (p. 355). Today almost 68% of American women with children under 18 work outside the home (Statistical Abstract, 1993).

Many women entered the work force in order to use the skills they learned in college and from a new sense of identity stimulated by the women's movement (Kornblum & Julian, 1995). However, most women went to work simply because they needed the money. For most families, the

reversal of economic trends that occurred in the late 1980's and early 1990's were major blows. Economic opportunities became less abundant and debt replaced savings. The cost of living outstripped disposable income and people found themselves working harder than ever just to keep from falling behind (p. 355).

Marriage Trends

The highest rates of divorce, amounting to about one-third of all divorces, occur in the first 3 years of marriage (Teachman, Polonki, & Scanzoni, 1987). One implication of this research is that couples who can plan the arrival of their children have a better marriage and family prognosis than those who cannot (Teachman, Polonki, & Scanzoni, 1987).

The long-term upward trend of divorce in the United States has been nearly matched by remarriage, reflecting an overall preference for marriage as opposed to single life (Glick & Norton, 1977). The rate of remarriage stopped increasing in the early 1970s, declining slightly through 1978, before moving upward again in 1979. It is estimated that in the recent past, about 80% of divorced men and women remarried (Glick & Norton, 1977). This figure may now be closer to 75% and varies according to sociodemographic

characteristics (Sweet, 1973; Thornton, 1975).

Most divorced individuals remarry within a short time period. The median duration between divorce and remarriage is estimated to be 2.3 years for those divorcing before 1970 and 3.0 years for those divorcing after 1970 (National Center for Health Statistics, 1980a). Although these trends confirm the strength of marriage and family forms, it is also true that combining children in a new family often adds conflict and tension to family life and is sometimes seen as a cause of relatively high divorce rates for such marriages (Ahlburg & DeVita, 1992).

Marital dissolution is more likely now than in the past for both first and second marriages. The probability of first marriages dissolving after 10 years of marriage was 0.20 in 1973 and 0.33 in 1995 ((Bramlett & Mosher, 2001). The probability of a second marriage dissolving after 10 years of marriage was 0.29 in 1973 and 0.39 in 1995 (p. 1).

As a demographic event, remarriage plays an important role in impacting households and families with separate families being combined into a single unit (Sweet, 1973). Remarriage changes the economic situation and living conditions of husbands, wives, and children. Remarriage bears consequences for child rearing responsibilities and

how interaction takes place between split families (Cherlin, 1981). These factors may be related to the higher rate of divorce among second and subsequent marriages than among first marriages (Sweet, 1973).

While about half of all marriages begun during the 1980s and early 1990s ended in divorce, another half did not. While divorces occur as often as 60% of the time with second or subsequent marriages, 40% of second marriages do not end in divorce. Since the breakup of marriages is more often associated with social problems, less attention is devoted to marriages that remain vital through the partners' lives. "It is almost a miracle that so many marriages remain satisfying in that each partner feels emotionally, sexually, and socially satisfied even with advancing age particularly when the stresses and changes that couples experience are considered and given the greater acceptance of divorce" (Kornblum & Julian, 1995, p. 355). Sociologists are only beginning to understand what makes marriages last and remain vital (Kitson, Benson-Babri, & Roach, 1985).

Adult Learning

Most adults learn in order to cope with some change in their lives, and this learning is tied to a triggering event (Aslanian & Bricknell, 1980, p. 111). These triggering

events were most often related to career and family changes such as moving to a new job, getting married, becoming pregnant, or experiencing a divorce (Merriam & Caferella, 1999, p. 107).

A qualitative study of work, love, and learning in adult life also found that issues related to one's work and personal life, including family changes, are sources of learning (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). Furthermore, study responders identified the learning related to these events as highly significant. In some cases this was to the point of bringing about a change in their world views (p. 107). Bringing about changes in world views is at the core of the adult learning concept of transformative learning.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs, and by consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds (Mezirow, 1997). Understanding the meaning of life experiences is a key defining condition of being human (Mezirow, 1997). Transformation theory analyzes and explains the process through which adults make meaning of their experiences (p. 5).

By the time a person reaches adulthood, a set of values has been established and ways to view the world and interpret life's experiences have been established (Taylor, 1998). New knowledge is integrated into an individual's pattern of behavior through the interpretation of new information through the screen of one's previously established values and experiences. Generally, new information is easily integrated into a person's system of values and learning experiences, serving to complement or expand one's world view. However, when new knowledge is contradictory to one's system of values and learning experiences, the person is faced with a dilemma and choice to either re-examine and/or adjust previously established values and learning experiences to accommodate the new information, or to reject the new knowledge. If a person chooses to re-examine existing values and learning experiences, the dilemma of new information triggers the transformational process, resulting in changes to one's perspective transformation. This is the process associated with transformative learning theory (p. 1).

Critical Reflection

Critical thinking is a major part of the transformative learning process. Critical reflection "is concerned with

developing the ability to assess both explicit and implicit claims, so as to determine what a person ought to do, or which claim to accept, on the basis of good reasons for that decision, rather than on the basis of force, chance or custom" (Langsdorf, 1988, p. 45). Critical thinking is informed by reflection; it is the same thing as reflective learning (Mezirow, 1990). Although it is possible to think without either reflecting or learning, thought that involves critical reflection involves learning (p. xvii). Much of what is learned involves making new interpretations that enable further differentiation, and reinforces long-established frames of reference or creates new meaning schemes (Mezirow, 1990). Perhaps even more central to adult learning than elaborating established meaning schemes is the process of reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what was learned still makes sense under present circumstances (p. 5). It is possible that critical reflection, or reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether or not it still makes sense under present circumstances, is part of the process utilized by adults who experience divorce and remarriage.

Life Stage Development

Adults tend to experience phases throughout their

lives that include times of growth, change, resulting developmental tasks, readiness to learn, and teachable moments (Knowles, 1980). Relating development to specific age periods has led a number of educators to propose a link between age-appropriate tasks and behavior and the fostering of learning activities for adults (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). Havighurst (1972) was one of the first to link these ideas into what he called the teachable moment. The idea of the teachable moment is based in the concept of developmental tasks. These are social tasks that arise at a certain period in a person's life, such as selecting a mate, starting a family, and getting started in an occupation (p. 102-103).

Levinson and Levinson (1996) suggested that people develop through an orderly sequence of stable and transitional periods that correspond with chronological age (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). They maintained that a persons' life structure tends to be established and maintained during stable periods and then questioned and changed during transitional periods (p. 101).

A sequential perspective featuring a step-wise upward movement not necessarily tied into chronological age is the basis for other adult developmental theories such as

Eriksons's eight stages of development (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). Each of the stages in Erikson's developmental theory represents a series of crises or issues to be dealt with over the life span. The steps are hierarchical in nature and build on one another. Some adult developmental theories describe an upward movement to higher stages and others depict adults moving back and forth across these stages (p. 103).

Another way of looking at life development stages the notion that individual life events such as birth, death, marriage, and divorce define a person's life (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). Wars and natural catastrophes can also shape the development of a person. "Timing and cohort specificity affect how a person experiences an event. Timing involves whether or not the event fits with either personal or societal expectations of when it should happen. Cohort specificity means that an event may only affect certain generations or it may affect different groups of people in different ways" (pp. 104-105).

The idea of life events being part of a process is often equated with life transitions (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). Transitions are looked at as the "natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks the turning

points of the path of growth including transformations." Adults continually experience transitions, some of which are anticipated while others are not. How they react to them depends on the type of transition or the context in which it occurs, as well as its impact on their lives (p. 105).

Andragogy

At the heart of any discussion of adult learning principles is Malcolm Knowles' concept of andragogy. Although this term did not originate with him, Knowles "popularized it at a time when adult educators were in search of a theory to call their own" (Lee, 1998, p. 48). Knowles first defined andragogy as an "emerging technology for adult learning" (p. 58) and compared it with pedagogy, a term which pertains to helping children learn. He later modified its meaning to "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980).

Knowles (1998) outlined six assumptions as the basis of andragogy. They include the idea that adults need to know why they need to learn something before beginning to learn it. Adults are responsible for their own decisions and for their own lives. Adult learners bring a wealth of experience to the learning activity. Readiness to learn is another component of andragogy. Adults become ready to

learn those things they need to know in order to cope with real-life situations. Adults learning is life-centered. The most potent motivators for adults to learn are internal such as the desire for increased quality of life (pp. 64-68).

The andragogical model assumes that adults are active learners involved in all steps of the learning process from selection of what is to be learned to evaluation of the success of the learning (Knowles, 1980). In andragogy, learners are the directors of their learning processes and learning needs. Although Knowles developed the andragogical model to explain the teaching-learning process for adults, he pointed out that this model has proven to be applicable to learners at all stages of life (p. 40).

Learning-How-to-Learn

The theory of learning-how-to-learn developed by Robert Smith is founded on the idea that it is "as important to teach adults how to learn as it is to specify particular curricular domains for learning" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 64). In his initial work, Smith (1976) offered a working definition of learning-how-to-learn as "a matter of the adults having or acquiring the knowledge and skill essential to function effectively in the various learning situations

in which learners find themselves" (p. 5). Adult learning is a process, and it is important to involve the learner in every phase of this process (Smith, 1976, p. 6). Learning-how-to-learn occurs in everyday lives, yet little research about learning-how-to-learn outside of formal educational or organizational settings exists (Brookfield, 1986). Instead of focusing on traditional school settings, learning to learn should be viewed as a project for life (Brookfield, 1986). Critical to this process is the development of each learner's awareness and capacity for effective self-monitoring and active reflection (Smith, 1991). When adult learners possess and practice these skills, they are able to learn-how-to-learn (p. 9).

Real-Life Learning

Important to the principle of learning-how-to-learn is the concept of real-life learning. While formal education is important, it is critical for adult learners to "learn on an ongoing basis in everyday, real world situations" (Kitazawa, 1991, p. 31). Real-life learning develops from the learner's real-life conditions and requires an understanding of such "personal factors as the learner's background, language, and culture as well as social factors such as poverty and discrimination" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989,

p. 25).

Learners in the real world must find their own information, which is often difficult to discover. Understanding what information is relevant and what is not is also an important part of real-life learning (Fellenz & Conti, 1998). Solving real-life problems may require examining opposing arguments. In addition, feedback on learning in real-life is undependable and real-life learners usually involve others in problem solving (pp. 64-65). Coping with divorce and re-marriage is a real-life situation that may include applications of real-life learning concepts.

Learning Styles and Strategies

Learners have individual differences in how they conduct learning activities (Fellenz & Conti, 1989). Those differences have been referred to as learning styles and learning strategies. Learning styles are the stable traits that learners are born with and on which they rely when involved in a learning situation (p. 8). Learning styles are generally established in childhood and remain constant throughout the learner's life (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 8).

In contrast to learning styles are the strategies that learners use when beginning a learning activity (Fellenz &

Conti, 1989). Adult learners use learning strategies in informal situations, and learning strategies "are more a matter of preference; they are developed throughout life and vary by task" (Fellenz & Conti, 1993, p. 4). As chosen approaches of adult learners, learning strategies may greatly impact the learners' success. "The skills or techniques selected to accomplish a learning task often have a great influence on the success of that learning activity. Adeptness and insight in the use of learning strategies is a significant part of one's ability to learn-how-to-learn" (Fellenz & Conti, p. 3).

An instrument called Assessing the Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS) was developed to quickly and accurately measure the learning strategy preferences of adults as they started a learning activity. The instrument identified three groups of learners called Navigators, Problem Solvers, and Engagers (Conti & Kolody, 1999a). These learning strategy approaches are organized around two basic approaches. People begin new learning projects either by using external resources or by having an internal appreciation of the significance of the learning. Navigators and Problem Solvers utilize external aids and emphasize organizing and monitoring the task. Engagers must

have an internal sense of importance of the learning before becoming involved with the learning project (Conti & Kolody, 1999). Being aware of their personal learning strategies can assist adult learners to adapt their own learning processes (Conti & Kolody, 1999).

Problem Statement

Many of the life events and transitions that adults face such as divorce and remarriage are specific to adulthood and require adjustments (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). These adjustments are often made through systematic learning activity. It is these transitions and life events that are likely to result in significant, meaningful learning (Merriam & Clark, 1992). They are also what motivate many adults to seek out learning (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). One study found that 83% of adult learners were involved in learning to cope with a transition, and 35% of these were family life transitions: "To know an adult's life schedule is to know an adult's learning schedule" (pp. 60-61).

What is not known about adults in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages is whether or not they applied adult learning principles to the divorce and remarriage process. While much is written about what makes

marriages fail, little is known about what makes them successful. Yet, the topic of marriage and high divorce rates is of great concern even to politicians in the state of Oklahoma. They site the economic and social impact of high divorce rates and seek to provide funds to help people stay in their marriages (Neal, Tulsa World, 2000).

With the high rates of divorce and remarriage, information on both the process and content of the learning adults in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages have applied to their marriages would be valuable for much of the population. People who are experiencing divorce would benefit from this information as well as counselors and therapists who work with adults experiencing these life transitions.

Programs that assist adults experiencing divorce could utilize information from the perceptions of the learning these couples have applied to their successful, subsequent marriages. Describing what the adults in successful subsequent marriages have learned and how they have learned it can provide information that can assist couples contemplating remarriage and impact the children of couples contemplating remarriage.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe what couples learned that contributed to the success of their subsequent marriages, and how they learned it. This dealt with both the content of what they learned and the process they used to learn it. Emphasis was placed on adult learning principles including transformational learning, critical reflection, and life stage development.

Research Questions

Several research questions were addressed in this study. These questions included:

1. What did the couples learn that contributes to the success they are experiencing in their self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages?
2. How did the adults in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages learn these things that contributed to their successful marriages?
3. What are the initial learning strategy preferences of people who are in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages?
4. How does learning strategy preference contribute to learning in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages?

Qualitative data was collected by conducting interviews with couples who are in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages. Individual interviews with couples were used because this format allowed the couples to share a more concentrated and personal account of their learning.

Building a House as a Metaphor

The written reports of qualitative inquiry can take a variety of forms. Consequently, there is no one customary organizational format (Glesne & Peskin, 1992; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Writers can use a variety of approaches in sharing the results depending on the themes arising from the data and how the writer believes the themes can best be represented. Presenting the world of the participants accurately, vividly, and convincingly is the goal of the writing (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Therefore, some qualitative reports may utilize traditional organizational designs while other reports may be more like "a novel with chapters that represent various themes" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

One method of illustrating the results of a study is to use a metaphor to portray the findings. A metaphor can provide an avenue for organizing and understanding the findings of a qualitative study. Teachers use metaphor to help their students understand an idea or theory. Writers use metaphor for their readers for the same purpose.

> Metaphors can be powerful and clever ways of communicating findings. A great deal of meaning can be conveyed in a single phrase with a powerful metaphor. Moreover, developing and using metaphors can be fun both for the analyst and for the reader. It is important, however, to make sure that the metaphor serves the data and not

> vice versa. Other cautions about using metaphors include being careful not to manipulate the data to fit the metaphor and making sure that the data fit the metaphor so that what is communicated is what the researcher wants communicated. It is also important to avoid writing the metaphor as if the world were really the way the metaphor suggests it is. (Patton, 2002, p. 505)

The major focus of this study is formed around the idea of building relationships. Through personal reflection, peer briefings, and member checks it was determined that the best representation of the participants and the themes emerging from the data analysis was the building of a house. Building a house provides a metaphor that lends itself to illuminate a study about the adult learning utilized by couples in self-identified successful, subsequent marriages. The study described the solid relationships that these couples built and what they learned in order to do that. The process of building a house can involve a great deal of learning for those involved in it.

The building process is a cooperative, constructive process that requires people to work together well, make compromises, and communicate with each other. This study found that there were crucial, key elements that the couples had to learn that they applied to their marriages including being able to communicate with each other and handle

conflict constructively. In addition, the home-building process includes several stages all of which are inter-related. Each stage must be completed before moving on to the next stage. This is analagous to the couples in the study who completed a divorce recovery process before moving into their self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages.

Just as there are clear, concise steps that must be completed in order to complete the building of a house, there were clear, concise steps that the couples in the study completed that contributed to the success of their marriages. These steps or key elements of the marriages worked together collectively to contribute to the success of the marriages. A house is built by completing clear, concise steps, all of which must be completed in order for the house to be finished. The building of a house metaphor is about the relationship of each part of the home-building process being completed to finish the house, not about house plans or blueprints.

There are different plans for different styles of houses. The couples in the study utilized the key elements of their marriages in different ways to fit their individual needs. However, despite these differences in styles, the

relationships still had the foundation of having completed the divorce recovery process just as all houses, regardless of individual style, rest on their foundations.

While the actual house itself could be looked upon as an inorganic object, the process of building a house and making it a home relates to the relationships of the people who are making the decisions about how to build the house.

When it is completed, the house provides the people who live there with shelter, a safe place to live, and hopefully, a place for them to thrive. The house will last for many years, provided care was taken in the beginning to complete a careful planning-and-building process including laying a firm foundation. The marriages described in the study have also been built to last on a firm foundation with much care, attention, and hard work.

One of the most attractive reasons to use this metaphor was that it provided the opportunity to use descriptive verbs or action words as a way to organize the themes into groupings that made thematic sense. Keeping in mind the cautionary notes about metaphors from the literature, the steps in building a house were analyzed and incorporated into the reporting of the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 2

CONSULTING THE EXPERTS

Consulting with experts is essential when building a house. An architect can provide professional expertise for the entire project. A contractor and subcontractors are experts who are needed to design and complete the plumbing, install the electrical elements, pour the foundation, frame the house, and construct the roof. In addition, looking at how others have built their houses can be useful when making decisions about how to build the new house.

This study examined adult learning in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages. Therefore, it was necessary to consult the experts and determine what had been written about key issues relating to self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages. This included investigating factors contributing to divorce; issues relating to subsequent marriages; characteristics of successful, long-term marriages; and adult learning concepts.

Factors Contributing to Divorce

There are no simple answers to the question of what causes divorce. One set of factors affecting divorce include societal influences, demographic factors, life course stages, and family processes (Strong, DeVault, Sayad, & Cohen, 2001, pp. 504-511). Another way of looking at factors or causes of divorce is to explore four different meanings of the term "cause of divorce." These are societal-level explanations, legal causes, social and psychological correlates of the decision to divorce, and the explanations of the divorced couple themselves (Kitson, Babri, Roach, 1985). Making this exploration more challenging is the fact that these four views of the cause of divorce do not necessarily coincide (p. 263).

Societal or social factors include the changing nature of the family (Strong, DeVault, Sayad & Cohen, 2001). Changing from an agricultural to an industrial society undermined the family's traditional focus. The family has lost many of its social and economic functions and as a result is less of a necessity (p. 504). In earlier times, a divorce would deprive both spouses of a great deal more than the pleasure of each others' company (Kornblum & Julian, 1995). In the past, family members performed many functions for one another. Divorce meant that a male farmer without a wife had no one to churn the cream into butter or care for

him when he was sick. A mother without a husband had no one to plow the fields and provide the food to feed the children. Today when emotional satisfaction is what holds marriages together, the loss of love or the emergence of incompatibilities and conflicts between husband and wife leave fewer reasons for a marriage to continue (p. 362). So, instead of the previous situation in which marriage fostered and sometimes forced a high degree of interdependence for structural reasons, today marriage has become to a much greater extent than previously an institution based on affection and emotional support (Goode, 1963; Winch et al., 1977). Ironically, of the ties that bind people together, emotional support and gratification are the most fragile and easily disrupted aspects of a relationship. This is particularly true with the growing emphasis in the United States on individualism, self-fulfillment, and personal satisfaction (Lasch, 1977; Weiss, 1975).

Outside agencies handle what used to be family functions, and this has reduced the ties that hold families together (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). Schools, doctors, counselors, and social workers provide their services whether the family stays together or not. Thus, less is lost by divorce now than in the past because marriage

provides fewer kinds of sustenance and satisfaction (Macionis, 1996).

Another social factor contributing to divorce is the degree of interaction between individuals and the larger community including residing in an urban area, church membership, and population change (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). This could also be referred to as regional differences in the divorce rate in the United States. There is a greater likelihood of divorce in the west, south central, mountain and Pacific regions of the United States. This includes the state of Oklahoma. The most common theories as to why this is the case are the "frontier atmosphere" and the "social disintegration" hypotheses (p. 263).

The frontier atmosphere hypothesis says that these regions have a tradition of individualism and self-sufficiency that does not foster a commitment to marriage (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). The social disintegration explanation for regional differences in divorce rates is that increased population growth produces social disintegration. A strong association was found between residential mobility and regional divorce rates in the U.S. Census and survey data even when controlling for socioeconomic variables. Other reasons for the regional

differences in divorce rates might be due to lower levels of social integration with extended families, neighborhoods, and church groups (pp. 263-4).

Individualistic cultural values are another societal factor related to divorce. Since the 1950s, self-fulfillment and personal growth have been increasingly valued (Guttman, 1993). As marriage and the family lost many of their earlier social and economic functions, their meaning shifted (Strong, DeVault, Sayad, & Cohen, 2001). Marriage and family are viewed as paths to individual fulfillment. When individual needs conflict with family needs, individual needs are no longer automatically submerged with those of the family. Divorce has emerged as an alternative to an unhappy or unfulfilling marriage (p. 506). Now divorce is linked with the pursuit of individual satisfaction, and there is less social pressure to stay married (Olson & DeFrain, 2000, p. 492).

Demographic factors contributing to divorce include employment status, income, educational level, race and ethnicity, as well as religion (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). A higher divorce rate is more characteristic of low-status occupations such as factory worker than of high status occupations such as executive. Unemployment contributes to marital stress and is related to increased

divorce rates. However, it appears that it is not simply unemployment that leads to divorce as divorce rates have gone down in periods of depression. Instead the issue seems to involve unstable employment and other marital problems brought about by lack of work (p. 270).

Studies conflict as to whether employed wives are more likely than those who are nonemployed outside the home to divorce. Wives' earnings appear to have an impact in explaining divorce, but this effect is impacted by husbands' earnings (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). When the wife's income is higher than her husband's, there is an increase in the likelihood of divorce. However, when the wife's income is the same or lower than her husband's, the chances of divorce are less. It may be that the wife's high income is inconsistent with the traditional role of husband as the main breadwinner, and this produces a strain in the marriage (p. 271).

As the family income increases, the divorce rate for both whites and African Americans decreases (Strong, DeVault, Sayed, & Cohen, 2001). However, a woman's chances of divorce are greater as her individual income increases. This may be because with greater incomes women are not economically dependent on their husbands, or it may be because there is an increase in conflict about family roles

or about inequitable workloads within the family both of which can increase marital tension (13).

The divorce rate decreases as the educational level increases. Men and women with only a high school education are more likely to divorce than those with a college education (Glick, 1984b). An exception to this finding is that women with graduate degrees have higher rates of divorce than women with undergraduate college educations (Carter & Glick, 1976). Individuals who drop out of high school or college also have a higher likelihood of marital instability (Glick & Norton, 1979). Not finishing school may be an indicator of the inability to make commitments to tasks or individuals (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985).

African Americans have consistently had higher divorce rates than whites or other racial groups (Norton & Glick, 1979). They are also less likely than whites to remarry (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). There is a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and divorce in that the lower the socioeconomic class, the more likely the person is to divorce. As income levels for African Americans increase, divorce rates decrease and become similar to those of whites. One possible explanation for racial differences in divorce rates is that the structural position of blacks in American society has caused their high

rates of marital discord. Black families are more unstable than white families because blacks generally earn less, are unemployed more often, and more often have low-status occupations when employed. Thus, their economic position creates stresses that produce psychological and social discord in the family (p. 267).

The likelihood of divorce decreases with involvement in religious activities (Glenn and Supancic, 1984). Since the major religions discourage divorce, highly religious men and women are less likely to accept divorce because it violates their values. It may also be that a shared religion and participation in organized religious life affirms the couple's relationship (Guttman, 1993; Wineberg, 1994).

Age at marriage is related to divorce (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). Teenage marriages are more likely to end in divorce than marriages contracted at later ages. The probability of a marriage ending in divorce is twice as great for couples who marry in their teens compared to couples who marry in their twenties. The impact of young marriages on the "struggle for independence from the family of orientation and the effect of subsequent changes in young adult role perceptions on the stability of young marriages" should be considered when trying to explain the high incidence of divorce for young marriages (p. 266). Age at

marriage seems to make little difference, however, after age 26 for men and age 23 for women (Glenn & Supancic, 1984).

Premarital pregnancy has been shown to be positively associated with divorce (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). The most important factors accounting for the high divorce rate because of premarital pregnancy were economic problems, lack of preparation for marriage, and a short period of courtship. In addition, there is typically more family opposition to these marriages (p. 272). The probability of divorce increases dramatically if the pregnant woman is an adolescent, drops out of high school, and faces economic problems following marriage (White, 1991 as cited in Olson & DeFrain, 2000). If a woman gives birth prior to marriage, the likelihood for divorce in a subsequent marriage increases especially in the early years (White, 1991, as cited in Olson & DeFrain, 2000).

People whose parents divorce have an increased likelihood of later divorce (Amato, 1996; Raschke, 1987). It is now estimated that parental divorce increases the chance of their children's marriage ending within the first 5 years by 70% (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). This holds for both whites and blacks but is more likely among whites. There is little consensus concerning the reasons for the relationship between parental divorce and the divorce of

their children. One hypothesis is that children from divorced families do not have appropriate role models for handling marital roles, particularly if there is continued post divorce hostility. Another theory is because of lack of parental supervision, young women from divorced families are more likely to marry at a young age, be pregnant at marriage, and marry men with low socioeconomic status (p. 265).

Couples with children divorce less often than couples without children (White, 1991 as cited in Olson & DeFrain, 2000). Furthermore, couples with two children divorce less often than couples with one child or none. In may be that troubled spouses hold off having children or if they have a child resist having more because of their troubles (p. 486). The fact that couples with children divorce less often than couples without children leads many people to believe that having children strengthens a marriage and adds to marital happiness. Sociological research conducted in the 1950's demonstrated that the facts are otherwise. Having babies early in a marriage does not make a couple happier and often makes them less happy (Monahan, 1955, p. 447). In subsequent decades, sociologists continued to find that people believe children strengthen marriages while the empirical evidence showed that having children increases the

strains on a couple's time, energy, money, and other resources and that couples who are not happy in their relationship often become less so when babies arrive (Ross & Huber, 1985).

Studies of divorced men and women cite such problems as alcoholism, drug abuse, marital infidelity, sexual incompatibility, and conflicts about gender roles as leading to their divorces (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). Based on interviews with almost 2,000 people, one study found the following: (a) while men and women reports were different in the particular problems they identified, both sets of problems predicted divorce equally well; (b) certain problems such as jealousy, moodiness, anger, poor communication, and drinking increased the odds of later divorce; sexual infidelity was an especially strong predictor of divorce; (c) people who divorce later report a higher number of problems as early as 9 to 12 years prior to their divorce; and (d) marital problems are proximal causes of later divorce (p. 279).

One course of information about the causes of divorce is the couples who have experienced divorce. A compilation of 9 different studies seeking to determine the causes of divorce with the sources of information provided by couples who are divorced found that 8 out of 9 studies mentioned

extramarital sex as a reason for divorce (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). Personality and financial problems were mentioned by 4 of the 9 studies, with the majority of the remaining complaints focusing on interpersonal problems such as lack of communication, feeling unloved, lack of family life, and conflicts over roles (p. 279).

In a national study of marital therapists who work with couples, the most prominent problems reported by couples themselves were identified (Whishman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). The results of their study demonstrated that poor communication, power struggles, unrealistic expectations about marriage, sexual relationship problems, and difficulties in decision making were the five issues most reported by couples (Olson & DeFrain, 2000, p. 492).

The actual day-to-day marital processes of communication which involves handling conflict, showing affection, and having other marital interactions may be the most important factors holding marriages together or dissolving them (Gottman, 1994). Some negative emotions are more toxic to the well-being of marriages than others. While anger is not as negative an emotion as some have suggested, the use of criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling in marital interactions is toxic (Gottman, 1996). The increasing distance and isolation in a marriage

leading up to divorce appears to result from couples experiencing emotional detachment and loneliness. "Thus, the trajectory toward divorce is one of increasing emotional toxicity and distance until there is no love left" (p. 19).

To learn more about the characteristics of happily married versus unhappily married couples, Fowers and Olson (1989) studied a national sample of 5,039 married couples. All the couples took the ENRICH marital inventory developed by Olson, Fournier, and Druckman (1989). The analysis showed that the scales could discriminate with about 90% accuracy between happily and unhappily married couples. Five of the scales were the most predictive: sexual relations, communication, conflict resolution, children and parenting, and leisure activities. However, scores of happy and unhappy couples differed significantly on almost all the scales with happily married couples getting significantly higher positive couple scores on all of the scales except financial management and equalitarian roles. The 3 scales on which the 2 groups showed the most significant differences were communication, conflict resolution, and sexual relations (Olson & DeFrain, 2000).

The divorce rate is higher for second marriages than for first marriages (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). The divorce rate among those who remarried in the 1980s is so

far about 25% higher than it is for those who entered first marriages in that decade (pp. 494-495). About two-thirds of first marriages continue for 10 years, but only a little more than half of remarriages reach the tenth anniversary. It is not clear why there is a higher divorce rate in remarriages. Some researchers suggest that the cause may lie in a "kinds-of-people" explanation. Probability factors associated with the kinds of people who divorced in first marriages such as low levels of education, unwillingness to settle for unsatisfactory marriages, and membership in certain ethnic groups are present in subsequent marriages, which increases the likelihood of divorce. A study on women found that women in their second marriages were less likely to be similar to their spouses with regard to age, religion, and education in both their first and second marriages than women who were presently in their first marriages. It is argued that these findings support the idea that those who divorce are divorce-prone because they select high-risk partners (p. 277).

Issues Related to Subsequent Marriages

One of the obvious differences between a prior marriage and a subsequent marriage is the fact that there are previous spouses as well as all of the experiences and attendant feelings from the prior marriage(s). After

experiencing divorce, an individual may feel concerned about the chances of success of a subsequent marriage. Experiencing a divorce recovery process that includes time to evaluate the prior marriage and the reasons for the divorce can be beneficial for the individual in these circumstances (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996). Additionally, spending time on becoming a fully developed individual, identifying values and goals, and essentially establishing a new sense of self can be especially valuable. At the 10 year point of a 25 year longitudinal study of families experiencing divorce and remarriage, it was found that some individuals worked through a divorce recovery process and some did not (pp. 278-279).

> Divorce can be a profound catalyst for psychological, social and economic change. Some people use divorce to reexamine assumptions about why the marriage failed; about roles and relationships, about who they are, how they feel, and what they are capable of doing. Some use the time after divorce to re-capture long forgotten self-images to begin to find a new self-image. They call upon old roots of their previous lives before getting married for the first time to build new self-esteem. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, pp. 4-5)

It is important for individuals experiencing a divorce to mourn the loss of the marriage that is ending (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996). Neglecting this step can cause the psychological marriage with its negative feelings to continue many years after the legal divorce has taken

place.

> One task of the divorce recovery period is mourning the loss of the marriage that is ending. The loss of the dreams and hopes of the marriage that were never fully realized and never will be realized need to be acknowledged and mourned. Only by mourning can a person regain or maintain perspective on what was lost. Only by mourning will the adults be able to close the door and move on. Even the most miserable marriage embodied some expectation of a better life, companionship, love, and esteem, and although no tears may be shed for the lost partner, the symbolic meaning of the marriage should be put to rest with gentleness. An unmourned marriage is one that psychologically continues and in so doing shores up the feelings associated with the separation, keeping them at their most hurtful. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 10)

Hendrix (1994) used an instructive approach in his book, Keeping the Love You Find. While this book was not necessarily aimed at people who have experienced a divorce, it recommended reviewing previous relationships both for the purpose of addressing old wounds and conflicts and completing an appraisal of what went wrong, what the unmet expectations were, and why certain choices were made. The person can take the appraisal and assess where growth and change are needed (p. 29).

Another issue that couples in subsequent marriages frequently have to address is that of children. "Children can play a critical role in a subsequent marriage; remarried couples cite children as the number one source of marital stress and tension. Establishing some kind of workable

relationship between stepparents and stepchildren and resolving their conflicts may be the key to a happy subsequent marriage and to successful functioning in stepfamilies" (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002, p. 181). Children experience great difficulties for many years after their parents divorce (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996). The majority (about 75-80%) of children whose parents divorced became well-functioning adults, but for many this did not occur until they were in their thirties (p. 11). For these children, the very foundation of their existence was destroyed and their lives became very chaotic.

> Divorce is a different experience for children and adults because the children lose something that is fundamental to their development -- the family structure. The family comprises the scaffolding upon which children mount successive developmental stages from infancy to adolescence. It supports their psychological, physical, and emotional ascent into maturity. When that structure collapses, the children's world s temporarily without supports. And children, do not know that the chaos is temporary. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 11)

New stepparents face many challenges as they enter into their new marriages (Blakeslee & Wallerstein, 1996). It can be important for stepparents to take their time in transitioning into their new roles as the new adults in these children's lives. "True obedience develops out of respect and trust and wanting to do things well because it's right -- not out of fear. Every adult-child relationship

has to develop slowly. Each stepparent has to earn the respect and love of a stepchild" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 13). "The kind of disruptive behavior that can make a child a wedge issue in a marriage is minimized when the biological parent continues to serve as the principal parent while the new stepparent initially focuses on providing support for discipline and establishing a friendship with the child. Children will not accept the authority of an adult until that adult has won their trust and respect" (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002, p. 182). "When adults understand this, the transition into a working, happy and rewarding remarriage with children can work splendidly" (p. 12).

It is important for the new families to establish routines, rules, and traditions that work for them. This can be particularly comforting for children who experience divorce as a time of great difficulty and disruption. A stepfamily has to begin its own traditions as rituals and routines are something they lack at the beginning. "Daily and weekly routines in a household offer a family both comfort and security. Predictability at home is especially important for children (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 13).

> Part of what makes a family feel like a family is a shared history and shared family routines,

> celebrations, and traditions. These are things new stepfamilies lack at the outset but can create and they help to promote a sense of identity and cohesion. The regular routines of family life such as eating together at six, reading before bed, going to church, regularly watching a favorite TV program help to build a sense of rootedness in a stepfamily. They help to make stepfamily life feel more organized, predictable, and reliable" (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002, p. 199).

Characteristics of Marital Satisfaction

What are the characteristics of long-term, successful marriages? There are many features of marriages that do not make a difference. For example, Consumers Union determined that demographic and social factors such as age, education, religion, and health are not strong predictors of marital happiness (Pearson, 1992, p. 10). Similarly, other demographic factors such as where someone lives, whether they are a man or a woman, and their income level do not predict satisfaction. For many years scholars tried to find predictors of marital success or failure by looking at social/demographic factors such as income, education, age at marriage, and the age difference between husband and wife (Fitzgerald, 1988). But social scientists now believe that these factors are far less important than the communication that occurs between partners. For example, it is not the lack of money that causes marital problems but rather how the couples communicate and negotiate with each other about

their economic difficulties (p. 31).

Indeed, the Consumers Union (Pearson, 1992) found that "wives and husbands who rate the quality of communication in their marriage as excellent or very good enjoy an astonishingly high proportion of happy marriages -- the highest for any group in this study" p. 10). Indeed, the wives and husbands most likely to be happily married after age 50 are those who maintain excellent or 'very good' communications with their spouse" (p. 10).

Communication emerges in most research studies as essential to marital satisfaction (Pearson, 1992). Classic studies by family researchers Lewis and Spanier (1979) identify communication as the major predictor of marital satisfaction. More recent work by Enrich Kirchler (1988) from the University of Linz in Austria suggests that "happiness is associated with frequency, posivity, and effectiveness of spousal interaction." (p. 11).

While communication is important to the long, happy marriage, it is not a simple matter of some easily learned communication skills (Pearson, 1992). No single model of successful communication abilities emerged among the older happily married couples. What is important is not the specific communication behaviors that happy couples enact but how they perceive their interactions (p. 13). In

romantic relationships, talk must accomplish many purposes -- signal interest, declare love, and join couples in marriage. However, it must also function in other, less pleasant ways such as arguing and complaining. Using talk to express negative emotions and dissatisfaction can be uncomfortable and/or unsuccessful for many couples (p. 7).

Another way to look at the importance of communication in a successful marriage is to understand the impact poor communication has on a relationship. Not being able to understand each other leads a couple to build defenses that keep the other person on the outside. This can lead to disappointments and emotional withdrawal and eventually an emotional divorce takes place even if a couple continues to be together in the same house.

> Both partners struggle to convey what they want or need in the relationship, never realizing they are speaking a language the other does not comprehend. Over the disappointment, the partners erect defenses against each other, becoming guarded. They stop confiding in each other, wall off parts of themselves, and withdraw emotionally from the relationship. They can't talk without blaming, so they stop listening. One spouse might leave, but if both stay they live together in an emotional divorce. (Parrott, 1995, p. 73)

When couples talk about having good communication they mean that they have relatively few communication impasses (Parrott, 1995). They are able to talk easily about difficult subjects. They feel they understand each other.

They withhold very little from each other and they rely on their ability to resolve conflicts. Good communication is built on who a person is and the kind of partner they are to their spouse, and not on specific communication techniques. Before practicing specific communication techniques these couples work on who they are as people (Parrott, 1995, p. 77).

There are several key, underlying characteristics that lead to better communication (Parrott, 1995). One is personal warmth based on acceptance which involves the partners accepting the thoughts, feelings, and actions of each other. This invites the partners to be themselves, and be relaxed and at peace. Another underlying characteristic is genuineness or each individual in the couple being real with each other. Finally, the characteristic of empathy is essential for both partners to practice in order to promote communication in a marriage. This involves bringing together both the cognitive and affective or sympathetic and analytic abilities to provide full understanding between the partners in the relationship (p. 73).

Happy couples are able to cope with conflict. Conflict is inevitable and happy couples seek methods appropriate for them to resolve their differences. They use a wide range of conflict resolution techniques (Pearson, 1992). Most

successful couples believe in facing their disagreements and dealing with their conflicts. While they do not resolve conflict in the same ways, couples who resolve their conflicts report high marital satisfaction (p. 159). In addition, people in satisfying relationships share the responsibility for conflict. They do not see it as a function of one person or the other but as something that occurs between them (p. 151). They say "we have a problem" rather than "you have a problem" (Parrott, 1995, p. 81). "Distressed couples said they found it difficult to agree upon a solution whereas happy couples found solutions that are mutually satisfactory" (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 38).

The most frequent conflicts of marital partners concern disagreements about sex, money, communication (or lack thereof), household chores, raising children, in-laws, jealousy, annoying habits, and how to spend leisure time (Gottman, 1979, cited in Cupach & Canary, 2000). Recent research suggests that satisfaction in relationships is identified with the frequency with which partners experience conflict in certain subject areas. In one study, individuals from more than 200 couples were asked to indicate how often they argued about each of 20 issues (p. 38). On the basis of analysis that differentiated the way in which the different conflict issues grouped together, six

general areas of conflict were identified. These areas included (a) power, (b) social issues, (c) personal flaws, (d) distrust, (e) intimacy, and (f) personal distance. Examples of power issues are major amounts of criticism and lack of equality. Politics and personal values are examples of social issues. Included in the personal flaws are drinking, smoking, and driving style. The distrust category included previous lovers and lying. Sex and lack of affection fell into the area intimacy issues, and personal distance issues included frequent physical absence. Partners' relational satisfaction was measured at the same time as the reports of frequent conflict. The satisfaction was negatively connected with the frequency of arguing in areas of power and intimacy. A follow-up study, conducted one year later, again measured the satisfaction of these couples and the reported frequency of arguing about power issues was associated with a decrease in relational satisfaction over the 1-year period (pp. 38-39).

There are two identifiers that distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied couples (Cupach & Canary, 2000). First, satisfied couples engaged in more constructive conflict behavior relative to destructive conflict behavior. The ratio of positive to negative conflict behavior in discussions between partners in a satisfied couple was five

to one. In other words, for each negative conflict behavior, the satisfied couple engaged in five positive behaviors. In dissatisfied couple discussions, however, the ratio was one to one; for every negative statement only one positive statement was offered. In this study, it was found that satisfied couples demonstrated more symmetry in their conflict interactions. For example, it was found that satisfied couples were much less likely than dissatisfied couples to engage in force, exploitation, or threats (p. 70).

In contrast to dissatisfied couples, satisfied couples did not return negative emotion (Cupach & Canary, 2000). In the typical satisfied relationship, when a partner said something negative, the other person avoided exchanging the insult, complaint, or show of anger. In the typical dissatisfied relationship, couples often engaged in exchanges of negative statements that lasted several turns. Dissatisfied couples engaged in patterns of attack-defend and attack-attack messages whereas highly satisfied couples did not participate in these patterns when such behaviors surfaced. Instead, satisfied couples returned confirming or other positive messages (pp. 71-72).

Pearson (1992) studied people in long-term marriages by interviewing 40 couples who were in self-identified happy

marriages that had lasted 40 to 50 years. Fitzpatrick (1988) completed a decade of research on the satisfaction of married couples with their marriages. Both researchers arrived at some conclusions about characteristics of happy marriages. According to Fitzpatrick (1985) happy couples exhibit: (a) more positive nonverbal cues, (b) more agreement and approval, (c) a higher ration of agreement to disagreement, (d) attempts to avoid conflict, (e) supportive behaviors, (f) compromises, (g) consistency in their use of nonverbal cues, (h) less criticism of each other, and (I) higher ratio of pleasing to displeasing behaviors (p. 698).

Pearson (1992) outlined a dozen key findings from her study of couples in long happy marriages. Many of them coincide with Fitzpatrick's list of nine items. Pearson's study (1992) found that happily married spouses love themselves and they love each other. This love includes respect, empathy, and unconditional acceptance. Happily married spouses do not set expectations for their marriages or for each other that are unrealistically high. In addition to accepting each other, they often come to appreciate each other's idiosyncrasies (p. 54). This level of understanding may result in a sense of peacefulness in the marriage; this is a sense of feeling so comfortable with the other person that there's little tension. This type of

understanding allows people to be increasingly honest with each other (p. 57).

Couples who have had long and happy marriages as opposed to those who have simply been married for a long time, may be distinguished on the basis of their understanding (Pearson, 1992). In general people in satisfying marriages evidence high levels of understanding and seem more inclined to consistently come to the aid of their partner (pp. 60-61).

These couples practice forgetfulness -- they tend to forget what some of the earlier struggles were about (Pearson, 1992). It is almost a form of symbolic interactionism. When people interact with each other over time, they begin to develop and maintain a common way of viewing events. Repeated interactions allow greater opportunities for shared perspectives. Since couples in long-term marriages have a longer period of interaction, they become highly similar in their relative perceptions (p. 75).

Happy couples are optimistic (Pearson, 1992). They interpret their experiences as positive and engage in positive behaviors. They agree with each other and reinforce each other. They exchange smiles, hugs, and compliments (p. 78). Happy couples exhibit unconditional

positive behaviors, which include smiling and hugging (Pearson, 1992). They compliment each other and thank each other for routine as well as special favors. They look for things they can for each other. This creates the effect of a positive spiral. Satisfied couples use more frequent, positive, and effective interaction, which leads to greater satisfaction (p. 79).

While enjoying being a couple, individuals in long, happy marriages are also skilled at maintaining their individualness. Couples may be highly separate, highly intimate, or somewhere in between (Olson & McCubbin, 1983).

Happily married couples benefit from sex-role crossover which begins for most people in their forties and continues through the rest of the life span (Pearson, 1992). Both women and men experience this crossover, which encourages women to become more masculine and men to become increasingly feminine. The sex role crossover may encourage greater closeness as both men and women have the opportunity of seeing the world form the other person's perspective. Men may understand better the frustration of housecleaning when the house simply gets dirty again while women might empathize with the difficulty of the competitive traditionally male work world (pp. 104-105).

Happily married couples talk to each other about their

feelings (Pearson, 1992). However, talking about ones' feelings does not necessarily refer to spilling out everything. For the average couple, selective disclosure of feelings seems more beneficial to marital harmony than indiscriminate catharsis (p. 111). Married couples who are satisfied with their relationship are also satisfied with their communication about sexual matters and with their sexual behavior. In general, couples have better sex lives as they get along better (Cupach & Comstock, 1990).

Finally, Pearson says happy couples are persistent (Pearson, 1992). They have a sense of perseverance or tenacity about themselves. They refuse to let go of their marriage or to give up. Researchers often refer to this characteristic as commitment (pp. 162-163).

Spiritual intimacy is another important characteristic of long-term successful marriages (Parrott, 1995). This includes worshiping and praying together. Research shows that worshiping together increases a couple's chances of staying married for life. No single factor seems to do more to cultivate oneness and a meaningful sense of purpose in marriage than a shared commitment to spiritual discovery (p. 135). For married couples, spiritual meaning should be a shared pursuit (Leckey, 1985, p. 227). While individuals come to an understanding of life's meaning alone, couples

discover and develop the meaning of their marriage together (Parrott, 1995).

Master-faith learners have found that they experience "positive benefits to their marriages through their faith. They believe that their faith has kept them from walking away or getting a divorce in times of difficulty" (Geerdes, 2003). The master-faith learners said that their trust in God was the reason they sought help from the Bible, the church, and other resources instead of giving up on their marriages (p. 24). The Bible "is still the greatest handbook on human behavior; when two people are related to the God of the Bible and to his Word, they will find that His principles will aid them in their spiritual adjustment" (LaHaye, 2002 p. 1). Five areas of spiritual adjustment can help to make marriages more solid (p. 1). They are (a) consistent Christian behavior within, (b) Christian service and witness to others helps to strengthen marriages, (c) spending time together with God through prayer is a powerful influence in the home, and (d) forgiveness offered to each other helps to remove anger and bitterness (LaHaye, 2002, pp. 1-2). Thus, spiritual growth and learning such as that of master-faith learners can aid in stronger marriages (Geerdes, 2003, p. 24).

Research supports couples worshiping together as a

means of nurturing the soul of a marriage (Parrott, 1995). Couples who attend church together even as little as once a month increase their chances of staying married for life. Studies have also shown that churchgoers feel better about their marriages than those who do not worship together. Worship has a way of transforming relationships (p. 142).

Susan Page (1994) studied characteristics of couples who are happily married and identified them as couples who thrive. She reports that couples who thrive establish a feeling of goodwill toward each other. This includes doing kind and generous deeds for each other, a willingness to focus on positive qualities, an attitude of gratitude, mutual tolerance and acceptance, respect, trust, and the ability to give. Unconditional love is simply total acceptance. This means they do not put any restrictions on their love for each other. Among many of the couples who thrive Page (1994) detected a slight feeling of awe that they had found each other, like it was a little miracle. Thriving couples take great joy in giving to each other (p. 41).

Couples who thrive have clear values; that is, these couples make it a priority to make time for each other as a couple (Page, 1994). "Thriving couples do not need to be told to make their relationship a high priority, they do it

automatically. Their relationship is not incidental in their lives, it is central. However, difficult they find ways to spend time together consistently and in variety of ways" (p. 46). "Even though it is a major challenge, most thriving couples find ways to spend high-quality time together. They do this not because they think they ought to, but because they want to. It is an instinctive, automatic priority for them" (pp. 48-49.) They enjoy their playtime and they spend much of it together. They do things together such as "dance, run or work out, hike, ski, play volleyball, play bridge, eat out, go to movies or the theater, concerts, entertain friends, and play parlor games. They share at least one interest. They often had separate interests as well but they respected and enjoyed each others' interests." (pp. 54-55).

Couples who thrive talk about their relationship with some regularity (Page, 1994).

> They pay attention to their relationship. They take its pulse fairly often, causally and naturally. They actively seek ways to nurture and strengthen their relationship. They participate in marriage strengthening activities such as Marriage Encounter, yoga weekends, communications skills seminars, and are quick to look for help if they get bogged down in their relationships in any way. They are not afraid to go to marriage counselors and have a few sessions with a marriage counselor (p. 61).

Couples who thrive are described as having an

"aliveness" (Page, 1994). Aliveness involves having deep knowledge of oneself, an authentic connection with other people, and with their environment, and an elevated cognizance of the present moment. People who are fully alive have an increased capability for fun and a feeling that life is flowing and that they are flowing with it. Happiness is a choice. They center on what they like and not on what they do not like. They completely experience their lives (pp. 66-69).

Thriving couples move back and forth between separation and togetherness because they know how to set boundaries (Page, 1994). Boundaries are clearly defined limits that allow people to operate more freely, confident they will not be infringing on each other's territory. Included in this area are time, space, household tasks, and money. Couples who thrive keep a balance between time spent on themselves as individuals and time spent on themselves as couples. They are able to handle challenges such as how space in the home is used by being considerate of each other's different tastes in styles and handling challenges like one person having cats while the other person does not have cats. They are able to meet their own are met and that their partners' needs are met. Because of the goodwill between the partners and a spirit of fair play, the household tasks are arranged

in a way that both partners find evenhanded. The couples who thrive handle money in a shared manner, and this relates to trust as well. These couples trust each other to keep their own boundaries (pp. 84-85).

Summary

There are commonalities in the information provided by studies of the characteristics of long, satisfying marriages as well as studies that describe factors affecting divorce. One common theme is how important communication and conflict resolution are to happy marriages and how the inability to communicate and resolve conflict effectively contribute to divorce. Expectations about marriage are another common theme with both happy and unhappy marriages. Pearson (1992) found that couples in long, happy marriages had realistic expectations of each other and of their marriages. Unrealistic expectations about marriage was one of the most prominent problems cited by unhappy couples (Whishman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997).

In addition, common themes exist between Pearson's (1992) descriptions of long-term, successful marriages and Page's (1994) couples who thrive. Both descriptions point out that the couples are very kind and look for things they can do for each other. They exhibit a positive regard for each other and have a positive attitude toward life. Total

acceptance and trust are characteristics of both couples who thrive and couples in long-term, successful marriages. Both sets of couples maintain their individualness yet make spending time together a priority.

Adult Learning

Andragogy

The question of how adults learn has interested scholars since adult education began as a field of practice in the 1920s (Merriam, 2001). There is still no one answer and no single theory or model of adult learning that explains all that is known about adult learners. This includes the many contexts in which learning takes place and the learning process itself. A beginning point to defining adult education as being different from other areas of education was established by Malcolm Knowles' (1968) proposal of a "new label and a new technology" of adult learning to distinguish it from pre-adult schooling (p. 351). Knowles utilized the concept of androgogy which was defined as the "art and science of helping adults learn" as contrasted with pedagogy, the art and science of helping children learn (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

Knowles (1980) developed six assumptions that described adult learners as having (a) independent self-concepts capable of directing their own learning, (b) accumulated a

reservoir of experiences that provide rich resources for learning, (c) learning needs related to changing social roles, (d) learning needs that are problem-centered, (e) being interested in immediately applying newly-learned knowledge, and (f) being motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (p. 47).

Malcolm Knowles (1980) valued adults' experience and viewed it as a resource to utilize during the learning process. This principle is considered by many as a hallmark of adult learning. "The central dynamic of the learning process is thus perceived to be the experience of the learners; experience being defined as the interaction between individuals and their environment" (p. 56).

Adults tend to prefer to immediately apply their learning to meet a present need in their life (1980). Learning is focused on a particular problem or task to be accomplished. Knowles (1980) stated "the problem-orientation of the learners implies that the most appropriate starting point for every learning experience is the problems and concerns that the adults have on their minds as they enter" (p. 54). A life-centered approach is then utilized as the origination of the learning process (p. 54).

Knowles moved from an andragogy versus pedagogy

approach and began organizing his concepts on a continuum ranging from teacher-directed to student-directed learning (Merriam, 2001). He acknowledged that both approaches are appropriate with children and adults depending on the situation. Adults who know little about a subject or situation may need a great deal of direction from a teacher while children who are very curious and very self-directed in their learning outside of school could also be more self-directed in school (pp. 5-6). This acknowledgment by Knowles resulted in andragogy being defined more by the learning situation than by the learner. (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). Divorce and remarriage transitions present opportunities for adults to utilize learning to focus on a particular problem or task as an appropriate starting point for a learning experience.

Andragogy has provided the foundation for exploring some of the definitions and philosophical issues related to the evolution of adult education as a scientific discipline and as a guide to practice (Merriam, 2001). It has made its biggest impact as a guide to practice (p. 8).

Self-Directed Learning

Another learning concept that assisted in defining adult learners as being different from children that began to be documented about the same time as Knowles' concept of

andragogy was self-directed learning (Merriam, 2001, p. 8). Knowles' first assumption in his description of adult learning describes adults as becoming increasingly self-directed as they mature. In addition, Knowles (1975) contributed to the literature on self-directed learning by explaining the concept and outlining how to implement it through learning contracts. However, it was Tough (1967, 1971) building on the work of Houle (1961) who developed a thorough description of self-directed learning as a form of study (Merriam, 2001). Tough described this type of learning that is widespread and occurs as part of adults' daily life as being systematic yet not dependent upon an instructor or a classroom. This concept created one of the major areas of research in the adult education field (pp. 8-9).

Early research on self-directed learning was descriptive and confirmed its pervasive nature among adults (Merriam, 2001). A significant number of adults learn in informal settings such as participating in courses or lessons, reading books, and listening to or talking with experts (Tough, 1979, p. 3). Tough (1979) found that approximately 90% of adults involve themselves annually in a major learning project and that 70% of these projects were initiated by the learner (p. 1). He concluded that most

people undertake learning efforts annually and that it is common for adults to spend 700 hours annually in learning projects. The learning project may have served to solve a real-life problem. It was also discovered that learners were searching for a short-term application to a problem or ways to accomplish a long-term goal (pp. 36-40). It was also found that adults often do not realize they are participating in a learning activity unless it takes place in a classroom setting. While they do not always call them learning projects, these adults recognized that learning did occur outside of formal work and educational settings (p. 15).

The goals of self-directed learning vary (Merriam, 2001). The orientation of self-directed learning can be the development of the learner's capacity to be self-directed, or it can be about fostering transformational learning utilizing critical reflection to increase self-knowledge (p. 9). "Self-knowledge is a basic prerequisite for autonomy in self-directed learning," (Mezirow, 1985, p. 27). Adult educators need "to assist adults to learn in a way that enhances their capability to learn as self-directed learners" (Mezirow, 1981, p. 137). Another goal for self-directed learning can be to promote emancipatory learning and social action (Brookfield, 1993; Collins, 1996).

The ways in which learners work through self-directed learning experiences are described in several models of the process (Merriam, 2001). Tough (1971) and Knowles (1975) provided the most linear models which go from diagnosing needs to identifying resources and instructional formats to evaluating outcomes (Merriam, 2001). Models developed in the late 1980s and late 1990s are less linear and more interactive. They take the learner, the context of the learning, and the nature of the learning into account. Literature about self-directed learning can also be categorized according to the learner and the extent to which self-directedness is a personal characteristic and associated with other variables such as educational level, creativity, learning style (p. 9).

While there has been a steady decline on the number of articles on self-directed learning since the 1980s, there is a move to take the study of self-directed learning to a new level (Brockett, 2000). This includes a focus on the quality of the experience and studying how people engage and manage their self-directed learning (p. 543). Other ideas for new areas of investigation which would expand understanding of adult learning through self-directed learning include (a) how some adults remain self-directed in their learning over long periods of time, (b) how the

process changes as learners move from beginner to expert in subject matter and learning strategies, and (c) how contextual factors interact with the personal characteristics on self-directed learners (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999).

Real-Life Learning

Adults often apply their learning to real-life situations (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 64). Real-life learning is "relevant to the living tasks of the individual in contrast to those tasks considered more appropriate to formal education" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989). Real-life learning stems from the learner's real-life situations and is contextualized. If the problem is important to the learner, it may turn into a self-actualizing process where the learner gathers the necessary information and solves life problems (p. 3).

Real-life learning is immediately applicable to adults' lives. This is different than teacher-directed learning that is appropriate to formal education. When real-life learning occurs more attention is given to the living tasks of individual learners rather than tasks proposed by formal education (Conti & Fellenz, 1989).

There are additional differences between learning in formal educational settings and real-life learning. Formal

education does not generally prepare people to learn from everyday life experience (Sternburg, 1990, p. 35). In a formal educational environment, the teacher identifies the problems for the students and designates which problems to solve. In real-life learning, learners must recognize a problem exists. Then the learner must accurately define the problem (p. 35).

Sternberg (1990) writes that in everyday life, problems are nebulous and lack structure while the problems in academe are straightforward. Real-life problems are unstructured, relate directly to the learners' lives, and have multiple answers which are unlike the structured, out-of-context, single-answer problems of formal education (pp. 37-39). Unlike the accessibility of test answers, answers to real-life problems are often elusive (p. 39).

The real-life learning tasks of adults are distinct for each individual, seldom follow a clear pattern, defy measurement, and are so episodic in nature that beginnings, patterns, and outcomes are impossible to define" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 4).

Learning-How-to-Learn

Learning-how-to-learn is the process of adults acquiring the knowledge and skill essential to function effectively in various learning situations (Smith, 1976).

Learning-how-to-learn "involves possessing, or acquiring, the knowledge and skill to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters (p. 5). If learners possess the necessary knowledge and skill, they've learned how to learn; and when learners help themselves or others to acquire that kind of knowledge or skill, the concept is also at work" (Smith, 1982, p. 19).

"A central task of learning-how-to-learn is developing awareness of oneself as a learner...self-understanding links directly to learning how to learn when learners become sensitive to, and in control of the learning process. In other words, more aware of themselves as learners" (Smith, 1982). "Learning to learn involves a set of processes in which the individual learner acts at least partially as a manager of self-change, and the focus of change is the learner's own self-concept and learning processes (p. 57). This requires that the learner be able to conceptualize his own learning process and be able to pay attention to how he goes about learning ...and thrust himself into managing the process" (p. 30).

The concept of learning-how-to-learn is helpful to people seeking to expand the effectiveness of their learning processes (Knowles, 1990). Three subprocess involved in the process of learning-how-to-learn include: (a) planning or

establishing how adult learners identify their needs, setting goals, and selecting resources and strategies; (b) conducting the actual learning activity in which procedures are negotiated and resources utilized as adult learners learn to give and receive feedback; (c) evaluating measuring the extent to which their learning goals are met (Smith, 1976, p. 6).

Three key components to learning-how-to-learn include: (a) determining what the learner needs to know such as general understandings, basic skills, and self-knowledge; (b) learning style or learners' highly individualized preferences and tendencies that influence their learning including the fact that people differ in how they think, approach problems, and process information during learning activities; (c) training or the actual providing of the learning about learning or improving learning proficiency (Smith, 1982, p. 17).

Adult learning hinges on successfully using the process of learning-how-to-learn. Understanding the process of learning-how-to-learn has applications to studying how adult learning impacts divorce and remarriage. Adults experiencing the life transitions of divorce and remarriage may benefit from having successfully learned to utilize the process of learning-how-to-learn.

Transformative Learning

Transformation brings to mind the idea of great physical or psychological changes (Baumgartner, 2001). Transformational learning is about people making profound changes through learning. Transformational learning is different than informational learning. Typically, learning is about adding on to what people already know (p. 15). Transformational learning, which can occur gradually or suddenly, changes the way people see themselves and their world (Clark, 1993). Much of the learning that people do in adulthood is adding to what they know, but transformational learning "changes how we know" (Kegan, 2000, p. 49).

There are several ways to approach transformational learning theory (Baumgartner, 2001). One approach is founded on Friere's (2000) concepts of emancipatory education. Friere saw learning as helping learners see their world and their place in it differently. Utilizing reflection and discussion about relevant life issues can empower learners and help them transform their world (p. 16).

Mezirow (1991, 2000) suggested a cognitive-rational approach to transformational learning. His theory shares theoretical foundations with Friere (Baumgartner, 2001). Both Friere and Mezirow assert that adult education should

lead to empowerment. Both take a constructivist approach to transformational learning (p. 15). The idea is that knowledge is not just out there somewhere waiting to be discovered but is created from interpretations and reinterpretations in light of new experiences. The revised meaning results in what Mezirow calls a "perspective transformation," which is characterized by a more "inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective" (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 14). While Friere's focus is on social-justice, Mezirow emphasizes the importance of rational thought and reflection in the transformational learning process (p. 14).

The process Mezirow (1990) describes for perspective transformation begins with a "disorienting dilemma" which is often a personal crisis (Mezirow, 1991). Next, people engage in thinking about themselves and their world (p. 168). This happens when people "realize something is not consistent with what they hold to be true" (Taylor, 1998, p. 9). Reflections on their meaning perspectives or their meaning schemes can result in a perspective transformation or change in world view (Mezirow, 2000, p. 2,). Third, people engage in "reflective discourse" (Mezirow, 2000). They talk with others about their new perspective to obtain consensual validation (p. 11). Finally, action on the new

perspective is taken. Living the new perspective is part of the process (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 17).

Meaning structures are culturally and psychologically defined assumptions and long held beliefs that are shaped by one's experiences and dictate one's behavior and world view (Taylor, 1998). Meaning structures act as a frame of reference for daily experiences and are inclusive of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives (p. 2).

Meaning schemes are "made up of specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5-6). Meaning schemes are idealized in an individual's habits and expectations, which influence individual behaviors and views (Cranton, 1994). They are supported by psychological assumptions and are defined as "rules, roles, and expectations that govern the way we see, feel, think, and act" (p. 24).

Meaning perspectives are a "collection of meaning schemes made up of higher-order schemata, theories, propositions, beliefs, prototypes, goal orientations and evaluations" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 2). Meaning perspectives provide an individual with a general frame of reference in which to evaluate a situation or experience as "right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, true and false, or

appropriate and inappropriate" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 44).

Mezirow (1991) defines perspective transformation as the "process of becoming acutely conscious of how and why one's assumptions have come to inform the way the world is perceived and understood; changing these arrangements of systematic expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discerning, and integrative viewpoint; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new perspectives" (p. 167).

Criticized over the years for ignoring the affective, emotional, and social context of the learning process, Mezirow (2000) now acknowledges their importance in the meaning-making process (p. 24). Learning occurs "in the real world in complex institutional, interpersonal, and historical settings and must be understood in the context of cultural orientations embodied in our frames of reference" (p. 24). Mezirow realizes that there are "asymmetrical power relationships" that influence the learning process (p. 28). Finally, Mezirow acknowledges that social interaction is important in the learning relationship (Merriam, 2001, p. 17).

Mezirow's theory was originally viewed as a linear process (Taylor, 2000b). Further research has indicated that it is a more "individualistic, fluid, and recursive

process than originally thought" (p. 292). In addition, certain aspects of the process such as working through feelings "seem to be more significant to change than other aspects" (p. 292). Taylor reports that "without the expression and recognition of feelings participants will not begin critical reflection" (p. 291). In other words, transformational learning is a complex process involving thoughts and feelings (p. 292). In addition, the triggering event or disorienting dilemma, which was originally conceptualized as a single, dramatic happening may actually be a "long, cumulative process" (Taylor, 2000b). Taylor cites Clark's 1991 research which found that several events may converge to start the process. Third, Taylor (2000b) noted that "the importance of relationships" in the transformational learning process" was the most common finding among all the studies reviewed" (p. 307).

Studies found that relational or rational discourse was "not only rationally driven but equally dependent on relational ways of knowing." (Taylor, 2000b, p. 306). In short, transformational learning is not an independent process but is an interdependent relationship built on trust (Merriam, 2001, p. 18). Context and culture in the transformational learning process also seem to be more important than originally thought (Taylor, 2000b). Research

has revealed that "personal contextual factors" such as "readiness for change" make people predisposed to a transformational learning experience (p. 309).

Transformational learning theory has expanded understanding of adult learning by explaining the meaning-making process. It is not what people know, but it is how people know that is important (Baumgartner, 2001). Mezirow's theory has provided insights into the importance of relationships, feelings, and context in the transformational learning process. In addition, critical reflection on the theory in combination with thoughtful discussion is leading to a broader, more inclusive understanding of transformational learning (p. 22).

As adults experience divorce and re-marriage, it is possible that they experience perspective transformation as they critically examine their assumptions about marriage, make choices and act upon their new understandings.

Critical Reflection

A key theme in transformational learning or perspective transformation is critical reflection and therefore it bears further examination (Brookfield, 1987). Thinking critically involves recognizing the assumptions underlying beliefs and behaviors and therefore means finding reasons for ideas and actions. Most important, perhaps, it means judging the

rationality of these justifications (p. 13).

To make meaning means to make sense of an experience and to interpret that experience (Mezirow, 1990). Making meaning becomes learning when this interpretation is used to guide decision-making or action. Reflection provides an opportunity to correct distortions in a person's beliefs and errors in problem solving. Critical reflection involves critiquing the presuppositions on which a person's beliefs have been built (p. 1).

Learning may be defined as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action (Mezirow, 1990).

> What is perceived and not perceived and what is thought and not thought are powerfully influenced by habits of expectation that constitute a person's frame of reference, that is a set of assumptions that structure the way experiences are interpreted. It is not possible to understand the nature of adult learning without taking into account the major role played by these habits in making meaning (p. 1).

Critical reflection addresses the question of the basis for the very premises on which problems are defined in the first place (Mezirow, 1990). Becoming critically aware of basic beliefs involves challenging established and habitual patterns of expectation or the meaning perspectives with which a person has made sense out of encounters with the

world and others. "To question the validity of a long-taken for granted meaning perspective based on an idea about oneself can involve the negation of values that have been very close to the center of one's self-concept" (p. 12).

Becoming critically reflective can be accomplished by challenging the established definition of a problem being addressed or by looking for a new metaphor that reorients problem solving in a more effective way (Mezirow, 1990). Critical reflection is not concerned with the how or the how to of what adults do but with the why, the reasons for and the consequences of their actions (p. 13).

Perspective transformation can occur in response to an externally imposed disorienting dilemma --a divorce, death of a loved one, change in job status, retirement, or other life event (Mezirow, 1990). The disorienting dilemma may also be evoked by something as simple as an eye-opening discussion, book, poem or painting or by one's efforts to understand a different culture that challenges one's presuppositions. Anomalies and dilemmas in which old ways of knowing cannot make sense become catalysts or "trigger events" that cause critical reflection and transformations. Changing social norms can make it much easier to encounter, entertain, and sustain changes in alternative perspectives (p. 14).

Development is often the outcome of transformative learning. Mezirow (1991) states that the process of perspective transformation is "the central process of adult development" (p. 155). Engaging life experience in a critically reflective manner is a necessary condition for transformation (Mezirow, 1990). Finally, the entire process is about change -- change that is growth enhancing and developmental (p. 14).

Life Stage Development

As with learning, the concept of development is most often equated with change (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). Most of the work in adult development focuses on the individual's internal process of development (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). The most common theories of development include an orderly progression tied to chronological time (p. 99). Some theorists such as Havighurst (1972) and Levinson and Levinson (1996) have tied each developmental period to a particular age, while others such as Erikson (1963) have left the age frame open ended and instead address life periods such as young adulthood and middle age. Still others center on life's transitions such as marriage, birth of a child or death (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999, p. 94). While the sequential models describe the unfolding of adult life in a series of phases or stages, they have

different final goals which range from becoming autonomous and independent to finding wisdom and a universal sense of faith and moral behavior (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999, p. 101).

Levinson and Levinson (1996) assert that development is tied to specific ages. For example, their studies of both men and women suggest that people move through an orderly sequence of stable and transitional periods that correlate with chronological age. An individual's life structure, tends to be established and maintained during stable periods and then questioned and changed during transitional periods (p. 22).

Components of this changing life structure include marriage, family, occupation, friendships, politics, religion, ethnicity and community, and leisure, recreation, memberships and roles in many social settings (Levinson & Levinson, 1996). The central elements are those that have the greatest significance for self and life. They receive the greatest share of one's time and energy and they strongly influence the character of the other components (p. 23).

Havighurst (1956) divided the adult years into three phases: (a) early adulthood, (b) middle age, and (c) later maturity. He identified 10 social roles of adulthood:

worker, mate, parent, homemaker, son or daughter of aging parents, citizen, friend, organization member, religious affiliate, and user of leisure time. Early Adulthood (ages 18 to 30) tasks were outlined as selecting a mate, learning to live with a marriage partner, starting a family, rearing children, managing a home, getting started in an occupation, taking on civic responsibility, finding a congenial social group. Middle age (ages 30-55) tasks included: achieving adult civic and social responsibility, establishing and maintaining an economic standard of living, assisting teenage children to become responsible and happy adults, developing adult leisure-time activities, relating to one's spouse as a person, accepting and adjusting to the physiological changes of middle age, adjusting to aging parents. Later maturity (ages 55 and over) tasks are adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health, adjusting to retirement and reduced income, adjusting to the death of a spouse, affiliating with one's age group, meeting social and civic obligations, establishing satisfactory physical living arrangements. Adulthood has its transition points and its crises. It is a developmental period in almost as complete a sense as childhood and adolescence are development periods (p. 1).

Erikson describes eight stages of development each

representing a series of crises or issues to be dealt with over the life span (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). For each stage there is a choice between a negative and a positive. Persons must achieve a positive ration of positive over negative before they move to the next stage. In young adulthood, the successful resolution between intimacy versus isolation results in love. In older adulthood, resolutions between integrity versus despair provide the capacity for wisdom. Identity versus identity confusion was identified by Erikson as a task for adolescence but researchers in adult development have also included this examination in their research on adults. Erikson observes that adults may revisit earlier stages to resolve or re-resolve conflicts from earlier periods in different ways. For example, because of a loss of a spouse, there may be a need to work through the issues of both intimacy and identity again. Personal development is achieved by adult learners by examining the basic assumptions on which they operate in order to help them move to higher levels of development and thinking. This idea is very similar to transformational learning and perspective transformation and could also be called transformational journeys (pp. 103-104).

Metacognition

Becoming a more effective learner is one purpose of

becoming familiar with ideas about metacognition. There are many definitions of metacognition, a term that was introduced into the field of cognitive psychology by John Flavell and Ann Brown in the 1970's. They developed the concept by observing the actions of knowledgeable, reflective learners who had "an awareness of and ability to monitor and control cognitive activities" in learning (Reynolds and Wade, 1986). Another description of metacognition is "thinking about the process of thinking" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 9). Brown (1982) defined metacognition as the knowledge and control one has over one's thinking and learning. This model of metacognition emphasizes the self-regulatory deliberate tactics a learner engages in to insure the success of the learning entered into (Reynolds & Wade, 1986). Observations of active, knowledgeable learners found that they had the ability to reflect on and control their learning processes. These learners seemed able to make their learning activities more efficient (p. 309). "It has become evident that the learner who is conscious of his or her learning processes has more control over those processes and therefore becomes a more effective learner" (p. 9).

Three major areas of metacognitive knowledge are awareness of self, task, and strategy (Flavell, 1979).

Awareness of self includes the insights and assumptions people have about their own personal cognitive abilities. This includes their concept of their ability to learn, insights into their cognitive strengths and weaknesses, and awareness of their learning styles. Valuable insights into learning skills include the ability to distinguish among intellectual challenges and to identify the most effective procedures for conducting various kinds of learning tasks (p. 907).

Metacognitive strategies are usually divided into three areas. Planning strategies include deriving the purpose from self and the situation, organizing, and identifying the steps essential to the learning process (Yussen, 1985). Metacognitive monitoring keeps the learner on track as learning takes place (Fellenz & Conti, 1989). It provides a reminder of the purpose of resources, of previous experiences and of the learner's strengths and weaknesses. Adjusting strategies helps the learner evaluate and regulate learning activities. This can include revision of learning plans and changing learning strategies in light of new knowledge or greater insight into the learning task or the learner's own learning abilities (p. 10).

Learning Strategies

Learners are born with traits that they utilize when

they are in a learning situation (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 8). A person's learning style is "the individual's characteristic ways of processing information, feeling, and behaving in certain learning situations" (Smith, 1982, p. 24). Learning style is one of the three components of the learning-how-to-learn process (Smith, 1982, p. 23). Learning styles are generally established and remain constant throughout a learner's life (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 8).

Learning strategies are what learners utilize when beginning a learning activity. In contrast to learning style, learning strategies are "the techniques or skills that an individual uses in order to accomplish a learning task" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 7). Learning strategies can be described as ways in which learners and their resources are arranged during learning situations (Smith, 1982, p. 113). While learning styles are influenced by the intrinsic ways of information processing, learning strategies deal with the methods learners use to gain information in different learning situations (Conti & Kolody, 1995). Learning strategies are behaviors that the learner chooses to use when attempting a learning task while learning styles tend to be intrinsic (Fellenz & Conti, 1989).

Learning strategies in the field of Adult Education

include the five concept areas of metacognition, metamotivation, memory, critical thinking and resource management (Fellenz & Conti, 1993). Using research in these five areas led to identifying three distinct groups of learners. These groups are called Navigators, Problem Solvers, and Engagers (Conti & Kolody, 1999).

Navigators are focused learners who plan a course of learning and follow it (Conti & Kolody, 1999a). They are high achievers who tend to concentrate on external learning processes. These learners rely on strategies such as planning, attention, identification and use of resources, and testing assumptions. Navigators work well with organized deadlines, defined goals, and clearly-communicated expectations (p. 9).

Critical thinking is the learning strategy most frequently associated with Problem Solvers (Conti & Kolody, 1999a). Like Navigators, these learners look externally at available resources that will best support their learning. Problem Solvers "rely on a reflecting thinking process which utilizes high order thinking skills" (p. 11). They frequently test assumptions, generate alternatives, and use conditional acceptance strategies. Problem Solvers are skilled at adjusting their learning processes and resources to fit their learning needs (p. 12).

Internally motivated, Engagers must be certain that a learning activity will be meaningful to them before they become involved (Conti & Kolody, 1999a). They are "passionate learners who love to learn, learn with feeling, and learn best when they are actively engaged in a meaningful manner" (p. 13). Engagers consider their efforts "as an extension of themselves and are motivated by feelings of satisfaction and pride. They focus on the process of learning rather than the content of the material being learned (p. 15).

Summary

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) determined that adults learn in order to cope with some change in their lives. Their study confirmed that "it is being in transition from one status in life to another that causes most adults to learn (p. 111)." They also determined that learning can precede, accompany, or follow life transitions. Some of the adults interviewed by Aslanian and Brickell (1980) were learning to cope with a change that had already taken place, others with a change still under way, and others with a change that lay ahead (p. 112). In addition, every adult who learned because of a transition pointed to a specific event that signaled precipitated, or triggered the transition and thus the learning. These triggering events included getting

married or getting divorced (Aslanian & Brickell, p. 114).

CHAPTER 3

DESIGNING THE BLUEPRINTS

Introduction

Designing the blueprints is an essential first step in the process of building a house. Before the blueprints can be designed, many questions have to be answered. What size should the house be? Where should it be built? How many rooms and what type of rooms should it include? These are just a very few of the myriad of questions that need to be addressed as the blueprints are designed. The blueprints provide a plan for the contractor and sub-contractors to follow. The plan includes the details of how the building will be constructed and where the electrical elements, plumbing fixtures, walls, and doors will be placed. Likewise, a design for a research study must be planned. The design for a research study, much like the blueprints for building a house, includes the details of how the study will be conducted. This includes choosing a design that fits the purpose of the study, determining the unit of analysis, planning a sampling strategy, and deciding what types of data will be collected and how. Other decisions

involve determining what type of analytical approach will be utilized, and how the validity of the findings will be addressed.

Design

This naturalistic study utilized a qualitative design to collect data related to understanding what couples in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages learned that contributed to the success of their marriages and how they learned it. Naturalistic design was appropriate because the inquiry was based on a search for meaning or on "how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 145). Naturalistic inquiry is a fluid, subjective approach to research. Guba (1978) described the key elements of naturalistic inquiry:

> Aimed at understanding actualities, social realities, and human perceptions that exist untainted by the obtrusiveness of formal measurement or preconceived questions. It is a process geared to the uncovering of many idiosyncratic, but nonetheless important stories told by real people, about real events, in real and natural ways. Naturalistic inquiry attempts to present "slice-of-life" episodes documented through natural language and representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, how they know it, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions, and understandings are. (p. 3)

The purposes of naturalistic inquiry are discovery, description, understanding, and interpretation within a

specific context (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Glesne & Peskin, 1992; Patton, 1990). The researcher is the primary data collection instrument and research tool for obtaining data through conducting interviews. In this study, the goal was to gather information from the meaning people in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages have constructed including how they make sense of their world and their experiences.

Qualitative research "implies a direct concern with experience as it is lived or felt or undergone" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 7).

> Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting ...The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (Patton, 1985, p. 1)

Qualitative research can be described has having five characteristics (Merriam, 1998). The first one is that the main concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives and not that of the researcher. A second characteristic is that the researcher

is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through the human instrument of the researcher instead of through a questionnaire or survey. The researcher is responsive to the context, can adapt techniques to the circumstances, and can consider non-verbal cues. A third characteristic is that qualitative research usually involves fieldwork. The researcher must physically go to the people, setting, site, or institution in order to observe behavior in its natural setting. A fourth characteristic is that this type of research builds concepts or theories rather than testing existing theory. The fifth characteristic is that qualitative research findings are in the form of themes, categories, typologies, tentative hypotheses, or even theory which have been inductively derived from the data. The product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon. The researcher is likely to provide descriptions of the context, the players involved, and the activities of interest. In addition, data in the form of participants' own words, direct citations from documents, and excerpts of videotapes are likely to be included in the findings of the study (pp. 7-8).

The study of successful, subsequent marriages shared

these five characteristics. The goal of the study was to elicit understanding of the learning applied in successful subsequent marriages. The researcher, not a questionnaire or survey, was the primary instrument of data collection, and interviews were utilized to collect the data. The interviews were completed in the field. In the case of this study, this was with the couples in their homes or locations of their choosing such as restaurants or a comfortable room on a college campus. The findings of the study includes quotes using the exact words of the interviewees, and the findings are organized into themes.

The Researcher

Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in a qualitative study, an awareness of the relationship of the researcher to the context of the study is important (Guba, 1978; Merriam, 1988). "Data are mediated through this human instrument . . . the researcher as instrument is responsive to the context; he or she can adapt techniques to the circumstances; the total context can be considered" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19).

> Qualitative research requires the evaluator to get close to the people and situations being studied in order to understand the details of the program life. The evaluator gets close to the program through physical proximity for a period of time, as well as through development of closeness in the social sense of intimacy and confidentiality. (Patton 1983, p. 43)

The design of this study takes into account the fact that I am participating in a self-identified, successful, subsequent marriage. My interest in this study stems from the experience in my own life of being divorced and remarried. In addition, it comes from observing over a period of several years couples who appeared to be very happy. Several of these couples serve on a committee that I have been a member of since 1996. I noticed that they behaved very lovingly toward each other. They appeared to look out for each other. I often saw them holding hands or touching each other affectionately. It was only later that I found out each of these couples had been married before and that the marriage I was observing was a subsequent marriage. This made me curious to learn more about them and their marriages. It seemed like I was meeting many of these couples who were in subsequent marriages and yet I was familiar with the statistics about subsequent marriages. It was my understanding that divorce rates for subsequent marriages were even higher than for first marriages. Yet, I personally knew several couples who were in subsequent marriages, that seemed very successful. At the same time, I was experiencing my own divorce after 22 years of marriage. It was my thought that I would be alone for the rest of my life. I was concerned that if I did marry again that the

chances for experiencing a successful marriage were small since subsequent marriages had such a high divorce rate. Therefore, these couples that I knew in their successful, subsequent marriages provided some hope for the possibility of being married again and for it to be a happy marriage like theirs. Since then I have married again, and we are enjoying our subsequent marriage and experiencing success and happiness as a couple. We celebrated our eighth anniversary of being together this July and our sixth wedding anniversary occurs this October. In addition to being interested in studying successful, subsequent marriages because I am experiencing one myself, I bring to this study my interest in adult learning principles including adult development, transformational learning, and critical reflection.

ATLAS

While the researcher was the primary data collection instrument, the Assessing the Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS) instrument was used as a mechanism at the interviews to help the participants begin looking at their marriages from a learning point of view. ATLAS is easy to administer and respondents are able to quickly identify their learning strategy profiles. ATLAS is an instrument that provides profiles and information concerning personal learning

strategies (Conti & Kolody, 1999). The ATLAS was completed rapidly, usually in 1 to 3 minutes.

The ATLAS uses a flow-chart design (Conti & Kolody, 1999). Items are printed on 5.5" x 11" pages of colored card stock. Sentence stems, which are in the top box on the page, lead to options in other boxes that complete the stem. Connecting arrows direct the respondent to the options. Each option leads the respondent to proceed to another colored page or to the concluding profile page that provides information about the respondent's correct group placement as a Navigator, Problem Solver, or Engager. Each profile has a description of the learning strategy characteristics and suggestions for conducting learning activities that complement the learning strategy profile (Conti & Kolody, 1999).

After completing the ATLAS, the participants were asked if the ATLAS correctly identified their learning strategies. All of the participants affirmed that the ATLAS did correctly reflect the way their go about beginning a learning task. More importantly, the ATLAS provided a mechanism for the participants to begin looking at their marriages from a learning perspective. Information gained from using the ATLAS was utilized to assist in understanding how these adults go about their learning projects.

ATLAS is a valid instrument for measuring the learning strategy preferences of adults in real-life learning situations (Conti & Kolody, 1998).

Validity is "the degree to which a test measures what it is intended to measure" (Gay, 1987, p. 553). Three kinds of validity are important. They are construct validity, content validity, and criterion-related validity. Construct validity is "the degree to which a test measures an intended hypothetical construct" (Gay, 1987, p. 131). The ATLAS instrument was based on the research findings of the Self-Knowledge Inventory of Lifelong Learning Strategies (SKILLS) and carries with it the validity of the SKILLS instrument (Conti & Fellenz, 1999). "The process of establishing construct validity for ATLAS was to synthesize the results of the numerous research studies using SKILLS and to consolidate these results" (Conti & Kolody, 1999, p. 16). SKILLS conceptualizes learning strategies for real-life learning as consisting of the areas of metacognition, metamotivation, memory, critical thinking, and resource management (p. 3). "The construct validity of ATLAS was established by reviewing the literature of studies actually using SKILLS in field-based research and by consolidating the similar data from many studies" (p. 18).

Cluster analysis was used with a data set of 3,070 of

these cases to identify three groups of learning strategy patterns (p. 17). These groups were identified as Navigators, Problem-Solvers, and Engagers; the three groups are distributed relatively evenly between Navigators -- 36.5%, Problem Solvers--31.8%, and Engagers--31.8% (p. 18).

Content validity is "the degree to which a test measures an intended content area" (Gay, 1987, p. 129). Content validity for ATLAS was established using discriminate analyses to determine the exact strategies pattern used by each group when compared to the other groups (Conti & Kolody, 1999, pp. 18-19), and each question in the instrument is based on one of these analyses. ATLAS appears to the learner in a flow-chart design with items on separate pages which guards against learners reading descriptions of other learning strategy preferences other than their own (p. 19). "Instead of multiple attempts to identify a characteristic, ATLAS uses discriminant analysis to precisely describe the content for each item" (p. 19).

Criterion-related validity is "validity which is determined by relating performance on a test to performance on another criterion" (Gay, 1987, p. 543). "In follow-up studies involving nearly 1,000 participants, approximately 90% of the respondents indicated that the ATLAS classification of their learning strategy preference is an

accurate description of their actual behavior" (Willyard, 2000, p. 88). In addition, a study of high school noncompleters "consistently indicated their agreement with the ATLAS description of their learning strategies" (James, 2000, p. 92). Ghost Bear (2001) found in a study of eBay users that 90% of the participants confirmed that their ATLAS grouping accurately described them.

Reliability is "the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures" (Gay, 1987, p. 135). If a test is reliable, people can be confident that the same results will be reached each time an instrument is administered (p. 135). "The more reliable a test is, the more confidence we can have that the scores obtained from the administration of the test are essentially the same scores that would be obtained if the test were readministered" (p. 135). If a researcher "places his effort in shoring up validity, reliability will follow" (Guba, 1978, p. 71).

While the reliability of the ATLAS instrument is ongoing, "test-retest measures results are approximately 90% accurate for placing people in the same learning strategy preference category" (Willyard, 2000, pp. 88-89).

Sample

A purposeful sample was utilized in this study. In

purposeful sampling, people are chosen who are knowledgeable about the subject and who provide an overall sense of the meaning of a concept, theme, or process (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). "A purposeful sample is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p. 48). In this study, the people who were interviewed were experts on the subject of successful subsequent marriages as they were all couples who were in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages. The unit of sample selection was the couple. The data from the interviews with the couples was analyzed in two ways including the couple and the individuals within each couple.

Both of the individuals in the couple had been divorced and re-married. It was determined that a couple could include two people who had been divorced twice or one person who had been divorced twice while his or her partner had been divorced once. The couples had to have been married more than five years in order to participate in the study. It was determined that the unit of analysis for this study was the couple, not the individuals within each couple, since the purpose of the study was to determine what the couples had learned and how they had learned it in order to make their subsequent marriages successful. Since the study

was about the marriages, it made sense that the unit of analysis was the couple.

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully (Patton, 1990). In purposeful sampling, the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sometimes the sample is determined before the study begins while in other studies the sample is identified as the study progresses (Patton, 1990). This idea is illustrated in the commonly used technique of snowball sampling (p. 237). In this form of sampling, the researcher identifies a few members of the phenomenal group identified for the study (Kuzel, in Crabree & Miller, 1992). These members are used to identify others, and then in turn others are identified. Unless the group is very large, one soon comes to a point at which efforts to net additional members cannot be justified in terms of the additional outlay of energy and resources. This point may be thought of as a point of redundancy or saturation (p. 40). Since the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units; thus redundancy is the primary criterion (p. 202).

This study utilized the snowball sampling technique.

The researcher knew several couples who seemed to be in happy, successful marriages that were second and even third marriages. As interviews were completed with these couples, they were asked to refer other couples that they knew who were in successful subsequent marriages to be interviewed for the study. In addition, the researcher mentioned the study to friends, acquaintances, and colleagues. Almost every time the study was described in these settings, people would volunteer to be interviewed or provide referrals. After completing interviews with 12 couples, the point of saturation was reached and the information gathered at the interviews began to be repeated.

Field Interviews

Key informants are individuals who are able to teach the researcher (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 74). There are individuals who possess special knowledge status or communication skills who are willing to share their knowledge and skills with the researcher and who have access to perspectives or observations denied the researcher (Goetz & LaCompte, 1984). The key informants in this study were experts on the subject of adult learning in successful subsequent marriages as they were all couples in successful subsequent marriages.

The most common form of interview is the person-to-

person encounter in which one person elicits information from another. Person-to-person interviews can be defined as a conversation, but it is a "conversation with a purpose" (Dexter, 1980, p. 136). The main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to find out what is "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). As Patton explains:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe....We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the word. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into other person's perspective. (p. 196)

Typically the type of interview utilized is determined by the amount of structure needed to gather the data (Merriam, 1988) Interviewing can be quite open ended and casual or quite structured (p. 72). For the most part, interviewing in qualitative investigations is open-ended and not structured (Merriam, 1998). One alternative is the semistructured interview. In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of somewhat structured questions. Usually specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a highly structured

section to the interview. However, the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (pp. 73-74).

The interviews completed for this study followed a semi-structured format. The researcher prepared an interview guide with issues to be explored and questions to be asked during the interview (Patton, 2002). The interview guide provided a way of ensuring that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each couple interviewed. It provided subject areas within which there was the ability to examine, investigate, and ask questions that would clarify that particular subject. This permitted the freedom to build a conversation on a subject area, word questions spontaneously, and establish a conversational manner but with the focus on a specific subject that was pre-determined (p. 322).

After some informal talk, the interviews began with the researcher explaining the purpose of the study and reviewing confidentiality measures with the couple. Early during the meeting, the researcher administered the ATLAS instrument.

ATLAS was found to be a good introduction to the interview process. ATLAS provides a way to bridge those initial awkward moments and to get the conversation started (Lively, 2000). The researcher asked open-ended questions and followed the lead of the interviewees with an interview format that was loosely structured and took advantage of the information being provided. Probing, follow-up questions were posed to the interviewees as appropriate to the situation being discussed. Toward the end of the interview, some specific demographic questions were asked. Sometimes the researcher called the couple after the interview to ask follow-up questions or to ask the demographic questions if they were not asked at the interview.

Asking good questions is at the heart of interviewing, and to collect meaningful data, a researcher must ask good questions (Merriam, 1998). The skillful use of probes can yield additional information about a topic (Merriam, 1987, pp. 82-83). Patton (1990) suggests that kinds of questions can include experience/behavior questions, opinion/values questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background/demographics questions (p. 295). These questions can be asked about the past, present, and future. "The way a question is worded is one of the most important elements determining how the interviewee will

respond" (p. 295). Questions asked in the interviews for this study included experience/behavior questions, feeling questions, and knowledge questions. In addition, questions were asked in the interviews were about the past and the present.

Effective communication during the interview is crucial, and interviewers should be well trained before the study begins (Gay, 1987, p. 204). The interviewer has taught a course on interviewing for undergraduate students for a local university. Before the first formal questions were asked, time was spent establishing rapport and putting the interviewees at ease. A question typically asked early in the interview was about how the couple met. The couples enjoyed talking about this and often they each had different details to add to the story. A series of questions was asked about how the couples made the decision to get married. They were asked how they made the decision and what led to the decision. They described what they talked about related to getting married. ATLAS was administered fairly early in the interview as well. This helped the couple begin thinking about their marriage in terms of learning. Queries related to the learning strategies that were identified as a result of taking ATLAS came next. The couples were asked if the learning strategy they identified

fit them. In addition, they were questioned regarding whether the identified learning strategy fit their spouse. This typically led to a discussion about learning activities in which the couple participated and how these activities impacted their marriage. Questions in this area of the interview included a request that they describe the learning activities in which they participated and how these learning activities influenced their marriage. Another series of questions related to how the couples arranged their family finances and the work responsibilities of the marriage related to maintaining their home. The couples were also queried about what they did for fun. Whether or not they had children from previous marriages or in their current marriage was another area of questioning. A description of how they handled raising the children in their marriages was requested. A key question during the interviews related to describing what was different in their current marriage compared with their previous marriages. The couples were asked about communication in their marriage and how that worked for them. The subject of conflicts was approached by asking the couples to characterize any conflicts they had experienced and how they handled them. Delineating the advice they would give to a couple who had experienced previous marriages and considering getting married again was

a question that occurred during the interviews. Near the end of the interview they were asked if there was anything else they wanted to discuss regarding their marriage that had not been covered. Finally, demographic items were reviewed including the couples' ages, educational level attained, occupations, children and ages, how long they were in their prior marriages, and number of years in their current marriage.

During the interviews, the researcher made full use of the advantages of the interview situation by being very alert and observant. This included being aware of non-verbal cues as well as verbal communication and utilizing active listening skills (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). The interviewer was sensitive to the reactions of the couple and allowed the interview to proceed accordingly (p. 80). The interviewer avoided words or actions that might make the couple being interviewed feel unhappy or feel threatened (Gay, 1987, p. 204).

Interviews were conducted with 12 couples. Each interview took from one hour and a half to two hours to complete. The interviews were conducted at a location of the couples' choosing. Five interviews were held in the couples' homes. At these interviews the couples typically provided some refreshments and the interview began with some

informal talk about their home or mutual interests. Two interviews took place at OSU-Tulsa in a comfortable room with upholstered furniture and wood floors. These interviews took place at a comfortably-sized table. Restaurants were the location of four of the interviews which took place over a meal. Care was taken by the researcher prior to these interviews to choose locations where the length of time at the table and the noise level in the restaurant would not be an issue negatively affecting the interview. One interview took place at the home of a mutual friend as this couple was visiting Tulsa from out of state.

The interviews completed for this study were audio-taped so that the interviewer could pay close attention to what was being said as well as to non-verbal cues. Freedom from taking notes also allowed the interviewer to listen carefully and ask probing follow-up questions when appropriate to gather more information about the topics being discussed.

A peer observer accompanied the researcher on each interview. The peer observer was the researcher's husband and his presence helped ease the initial awkwardness sometimes present at seemingly formal meetings. Since the unit of analysis was the couple, the interview process was

assisted by having a couple conducting the interview. The peer observer insured that the information gathered at the interviews was recorded by attending to the tape recorder thereby allowing the researcher to concentrate totally on the couple during the interview. The peer observer provided his observations after each interview and since he heard every interview in its entirety his observations were very valuable in providing a balanced view of the information that was gathered. The information gathered and observations were discussed for validation purposes with the peer observer. These discussions served as a peer check in further analyzing the data and establishing validity (Kittredge, 1998). Independent observer analysis involves asking whether another independent observer saw or heard the same things as the first observer did and whether the same conceptual discoveries were made as the first observer (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 186).

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous (Patton, 2002). No precise or agreed-on terms describe varieties and processes of qualitative analysis. Content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core

consistencies and meanings. The core meanings found through content analysis are often called patterns or themes. It can also be called pattern analysis or theme analysis. Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data. Findings emerge out of the data through the analyst's interactions with the data in contrast to deductive analysis where the data are analyzed according to an existing framework. Qualitative analysis is typically inductive in the early stages especially when figuring out possible categories, patterns, and themes (p. 435-453).

The task of converting field notes and observations about issues and concerns into systematic categories is a difficult one (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). No foolproof procedures exist for performing for analysis. There are, however, several useful categorizing steps that the researcher can take. The first step is to look for recurring regularities or patterns in the data. These regularities form the basis for an initial sorting of information into categories that are ultimately labeled as concerns and issues. In this process, it is likely that a considerable number of individual data items will be placed into an "other" or "miscellaneous" group because they do not seem to fit into a specific category. In some cases, these

data items can be safely ignored as subjective, idiosyncratic observations of no real substance. In other cases, however, they may represent keen observations or judgments made by persons uniquely qualified to make them (p. 93).

Often the researcher will not be able to tell in the beginning into which category the observation fits (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Everything needs to be taken seriously until evidence accrues to the contrary; the importance or applicability of an item certainly cannot be judged just by how often it occurs. Once a preliminary set of categories has been developed, certain systematic checks should be made. "The purpose of a category set is a function of the internal homogeneity along items classified in any particular category and of the external heterogeneity among categories. If a given category is to be defensible as encompassing a single concept, all the items within it ought to look alike" (p. 94).

The development of an satisfactory set of categories cannot be accomplished in one step (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Early accumulation of data is organized into a preliminary set of categories that can be tested, refined, and extended as more data is gathered. The category system is thus a dynamic entity, constantly changing and improving (p. 94).

The researcher transcribed the data from the taped interviews immediately after each interview.

> Transcribing offers another point of transition between data collection and analysis as part of data management and preparation. Doing all or some of one's own interview transcriptions (instead of having them done by a transcriber), for example, provides an opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates emergent insights. Doing one's own transcriptions, or at least checking them by listening to the tapes as they are read, can be quite different from just working off transcripts done by someone else (Patton, 2002, p. 441).

The researcher found that listening to the tapes and transcribing the data did provide an opportunity to absorb and become intimate with the data. In addition, beginning thoughts about potential categories were generated by completing this activity.

Once several interviews were transcribed, the researcher began to comb through the transcribed notes looking for patterns in phrases and words. Preliminary ideas on similar themes were formulated by the researcher from the first few interviews. As more interviews were completed and transcribed, additional themes were formulated and original themes were combined with other themes. Once all of the interviews were finished and transcriptions were reviewed, more themes were identified. Nothing was eliminated at first with the idea that every statement or quote had the potential of being organized into a theme or

category. The researcher then reviewed each category or theme and looked for sub-categories that fit within each theme. The information was organized into the categories and sub-categories using word processing software. Much thought was given to what order the themes or categories should be organized into that would make the most sense. If a category only had a few quotes, it was combined with another category with similar ideas in it. The researcher completed numerous reviews of the data and the categories were reviewed and re-organized several times.

Constant Comparative Analysis

Because of the basic strategy of the concept-building orientation of all qualitative research, the constant comparative method of data analysis has been adopted by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory (Merriam, 1998). The basic strategy of the method is to do just what its name implies - constantly compare. The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances (p. 159).

Categories are created when a researcher groups or clusters data, and these clusters become the basis for the

organization of the data (Dey, 1993). This is a crucial element in the process of analyzing the data. "Content analysis, or analyzing the content of interviews and observations is the process of identifying, coding and categorizing the primary patterns of the data" (p. 97). The qualitative analysts "effort at uncovering patterns, themes and categories is a creative process that requires making carefully considered judgements about what is really significant and meaningful in the data" (Patton, 1990, p. 406).

Categories are created naturally with the process of finding a focus for the analysis and reading and annotating the data (Dey, 1993, p. 99). The categories "emerge out of the data, rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 390). In order to successfully generate categories, "a researcher should become thoroughly familiar with the data, be sensitive to the context of the data, be prepared to extend, change and discard categories, consider connections and avoid needless overlaps, record the criteria on which categories decisions are to be taken and consider alternative ways of categorizing and interpreting data (Dey, 1993, p. 100).

The researcher did become thoroughly familiar with the data gathered from the transcriptions of the interviews.

This was accomplished because the researcher discussed the interviews with the peer reviewer after each interview as well as after several sets of interviews were completed. In addition, the transcriptions of the interviews were completed by the researcher. This provided another thorough review of the data given at the interviews. In addition, the researcher constantly compared the data that was initially gathered with the data that was provided by interviews that occurred later in the process as well as with information from the literature review.

The categories emerged from the data and were not imposed on the data prior to collection and analysis. The researcher is an Engager, and therefore, finds discussion with another person helpful when formulating ideas. As tentative categories were beginning to emerge from the data, a discussion about these tentative categories was held with a colleague who was also completing a qualitative study. Several talks of this same nature took place with the peer observer. Another discussion about the tentative categories was held with the researcher's faculty advisor. From these exchanges, more definitive ideas about the themes and categories emerged. Another source of determining the categories involved critically reflecting on the data. This consisted of the researcher thinking about the data and

applying questioning techniques. Some examples of questions that were asked by the researcher as the data were reviewed were: What is this person really saying? What does this statement mean? What is it about? What is a word or phrase that describes what is being said? These discussion, thinking, and questioning techniques were key components to the development of the categories derived from the data collected at the interviews with the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages.

Member Checks and Peer Briefings

The major criterion for a set of categories is its credibility to the audiences involved (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). When the preliminary set of categories has been developed, the evaluator should test it against the perceptions of audience members, that is, conduct member checks. Since the data were derived through interviews with these persons, it is reasonable that the evaluator should check the interpretations with some of these same individuals. They should also be asked to comment on the factual accuracy and the credibility of interpretations made by the evaluator (p. 316).

The "member-check" sample can serve a useful purpose in addition to that of commenting on data already collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It can help the evaluator to

confirm the existence of categories implied by the original data set but that had not yet emerged and to flesh out those incomplete categories of information already identified (p. 316).

Member-checks were conducted in this study with three of the couples who had been initially interviewed. The categories derived from the analysis were reviewed with these three couples in three separate interviews. The purpose of these member checks was to see if these couples concurred with the categories or themes that had been identified by the researcher utilizing the constant comparative method of analysis. The three couples confirmed that the categories or themes derived from the interviews and identified by the researcher made sense to them. They felt the categories accurately identified their descriptions of the learning that took place in their self-identified, successful subsequent marriages.

In addition, the findings of the study were reviewed at two peer briefings. Peer briefing is a consultation with other experts who help to confirm the initial research findings, and to provide additional insights in the interpretation of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1988). One peer briefing group consisted of undergraduate students participating in a class taught by the researcher

on Marriage and Communication. The students were composed of people in their twenties who had never been married and some that age who were newly married. It also included two students in their forties who were in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages. At least one-third of the students grew up in homes in which their parents were divorced. In addition, several students had been married but were now divorced. The other peer review group consisted of colleagues of the researcher all of whom were doctoral students or had earned their doctoral degrees within the past 2 years. Both peer review groups confirmed the viability of the findings of the study based on their own life experiences.

CHAPTER 4

DISCOVERING THE BUILDING PROCESS

Building a self-identified, successful, subsequent marriage is analogous to the process of building a house. The house-building process itself includes many steps, with one building on the other. For example, in the construction of a house there is a relationship between the foundation, the wood framing of the house, the sheetrock for the walls, the electrical elements, plumbing fixtures, the windows, the doors, the floors, and the roof. Each part of the house builds upon the other beginning with a strong, sturdy foundation. The house begins and ends, though, with the people who will live there. This is what the house is really about. It is being built for the people who will live in it. Likewise, the key to this study was the participants who were interviewed and provided the data.

The Participants

Twelve couples were interviewed for the study. Eight of the twelve couples included individuals who had each been married twice. Both the husband and wife in one couple had

been married three times. Two of the husbands and one of the wives in three of the couples had each been married three times. One of the husbands was Native American, one couple was African American and the remainder of the participants in the study were Caucasian. Of the 24 people in the study, 3 had high school diplomas plus technical training, 6 had bachelor's degrees, 9 had master's degrees, and 6 had completed a doctorate.

Levinson and Levinson (1996) studied the development of both men and women. They maintain that people experience an orderly sequence of stable and transitional periods that correlate with chronological age (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 101). The design of a person's life is established during stable periods and then questioned and changed during transitional periods (Levinson & Levinson, 1996). The ages of the couples may affect what they are doing with their careers and leisure time, whether they are still raising children or have grandchildren, or if they are dealing with health issues. Since it takes time to experience a first marriage, divorce and re-marriage, the youngest couples in the study were in their forties or middle adulthood and the oldest couples were in their sixties and seventies or late adulthood. Middle adulthood is defined as ages 45 to 60 and older adulthood is from age 60 until death (Levinson &

Levinson, 1996, p. 18).

Middle-Adulthood Couples

Nine of the couples are in what can be termed the middle adulthood stage of their lives (Levinson and Levinson, 1996, p. 18). Two of them have teen-age daughters at home and are dealing with curfews, homework, tennis lessons and serious health issues like anorexia. Five of the middle adulthood couples have children who have just started or completed college and have the financial challenges related to this schooling. Two of the couples have children who have married and have children, and they are enjoying being grandparents.

All of the middle adulthood couples are working but are at different stages of their career development. The majority are very settled in their careers and have been working in jobs such as accountants, lawyers, teachers, and engineers for many years. However, some of them are still pursuing an upward direction toward more responsible positions, and still others are moving out of the very responsible levels in which they have worked for years into less demanding positions. Several of the women have been going to school and as a result are exploring or experiencing new careers.

Anita and Jim Grandfork have been married for 15 years.

Anita completed her doctorate recently and is now a professor at a local private university after years of having her own consulting business in the early childhood training. Jim is an attorney and has had a private practice for many years. Jim and Anita met and became friends as they each pursued their own spiritual journey within the Episcopal Church. Jim and Anita found that getting to know each other as friends as they participated in church activities provided a firm foundation for their marriage. Jim has a grown son from his first marriage. Jim and Anita raised Anita's two daughters in their home, and one of them graduated from college recently.

Linda and Dan Brown also have a firm foundation in their church. They were members of the same church for many years but Linda said she did not even notice Dan at first because he was 7 years younger than she was. Dan went to college in another state, got married, and got divorced. Linda continued to be active in the church, but she also married and had two children. During this time, she took the place in the church choir that Dan vacated to go to college; later Dan took Linda's place in the choir when she left it to have her second child. They began dating some time after Linda's husband left her with a 9-month-old baby and a 4-year-old. From the beginning, Dan dated Linda and

her two children. Linda told him they were a package deal, and Dan, who had never had children of his own, considers Linda's children as much his as hers. Dan, an engineer, recently completed a master's degree. Linda is working on her master's degree and will finish soon. The Brown's have been married for over 9 years.

Talia and Victor Wentz met as a result of their pursuit of the study of the Bible. Through different sources, they each met and began working with a woman named Wanda who held regular Bible study sessions. Wanda insisted that Talia and Victor meet and within one month of that meeting they married. That was 15 years ago. Talia is pursuing her doctorate and, at the time of the interview, worked at a non-profit, private religious-based organization. Victor has completed technical training beyond high school and works at a technical company. They raised both Talia's and Victor's children who are now doing very well in college.

Sharon and Bob White met when their 4-year-old daughters, who attended the same day care center, arranged an "accidental" get-together. The girls wanted to spend more time with each other and decided the best way to do that was to get their divorced parents to meet. That was 10 years ago, and the White's have been married for 9 years. The girls are now 14 and both of them live with Sharon and

Bob. Bob, a CPA, has been settled in his career for quite sometime, and Sharon, who is completing her doctorate at this time, is an upwardly mobile administrator at the local campus of a national, private university.

Studying about other cultures, countries, literature, and history and then visiting those countries is a favorite activity of Mary Beth and Frank Taylor who have been married for 9 years. She teaches humanities at a local college, and he works for the federal government. They are raising Mary Beth's 14-year-old daughter in their home but, the daughter's biological father visits often and is very much a part of her life. Frank is an avid tennis player and makes all the arrangements for Mary Beth's daughter's tennis lessons and tennis-related activities. Mary Beth says she would rather drive an old car and save money in other areas of her life so she and Frank can travel to other countries or other parts of the United States. Married now for over 9 years, Mary Beth and Frank say they enjoy studying about the area they plan to visit almost as much as the trip itself.

Karen and Fred Hice have been enjoying fixing up their newly-purchased home. Karen, who is in her forties, completed her doctorate within the past few years and is a high level administrator with a local college. Fred, who is 15 years older than Karen, recently began teaching at a

private, middle school after years of being an administrator in the public schools. Karen and Fred have been married for 9 years and became friends when they team-taught together at an area public school. They deal with the challenges of finding time to spend together with Karen's demanding job which can extend into evening time several times a week. They also enjoy traveling together, even if it is only visiting area towns and checking out the local museums. Karen did not have children from her first marriage while Fred's children are grown.

Mutual friends arranged for elementary school counselor Elizabeth and college professor Preston to meet at lunch. The Walters have now been married for 11 years and Elizabeth's three sons and Preston's two sons are all married. They raised Elizabeth's youngest son and Carlton's youngest son in their home which was the house that Preston had lived in with his first wife. At first Elizabeth wanted to sell Carlton's house and her house, and move into their own home. However, after awhile, she realized they were quite comfortable in his house which they have now completely renovated to meet their needs.

Jenna Spicer's kindergarten-age son met her future husband, Ron, before she did. Ron, a firefighter, visited Jenna's son's school as part of a fire-prevention program.

For days after that, all he talked about was what "my friend the fireman" had told them at school. Jenna figured out that Ron was her son's "fireman friend" when they met for lunch for the first time. Both Jenna's and Ron's first marriages lasted about 8 years. After 4-5 years of being single, Jenna and Ron have been married 27 years. Jenna, who is 59, has been a university professor who now coordinates a grant-funded program that assists teachers to teach international studies. Ron, at age 57, writes technical manuals for a nearby university as well as being an adjunct history instructor.

Utilizing a holistic approach to ranching is the focus of John and Cathy Keilor who have been married for 13 years. Cathy is the Executive Director of a local non-profit historical organization. They met when Jim called on Cathy to see if her organization needed to use his printing business. They put together historical exhibits utilizing their complementary talents for many years after that first meeting. They raised Cathy's son who refers to Cathy and Jim as his parents. Their primary work centers around Cathy's a ranch which was originally founded by Cathy's father. This involves learning how to raise sheep, how to manage the natural elements, and how to make the most of the natural resources offered by the ranch. They enjoy doing

projects together that take advantage of the ranch and are researching how Cathy can make sweaters from the wool from the sheep on their ranch with Jim designing and making the buttons using his jewelry-making skills.

Late-Adulthood Couples

Three couples fall into what Levinson and Levinson (1996, p. 22) call late adulthood. They are in their sixties and seventies, and two of the couples are retired at least in terms of going daily to a regular job. However, they stay very busy with learning activities, hobbies, and volunteering. The husband and wife in one of the couples continue to work at daily jobs. All three couples have children who are grown, married, and have children of their own so these couples have grandchildren to enjoy. In addition, several of them are dealing with health issues that have affected their usual levels of activity.

Eleanor and Lance Green perform in a band that entertains at local nursing homes. Married for over 22 years, they met at a square dance and continued to participate in that activity until recently. Eleanor is fighting cancer, and her doctors have told her she has an excellent prognosis for a complete recovery. However, it has affected, for the time being, her energy level and ability to go out square dancing and performing for the time

being. Lance likes to help the people in the neighborhood who live alone with their yard work and simple repair jobs. He also does the cooking for Eleanor and himself. Eleanor taught school for many years until she retired, and Lance worked in manufacturing. Eleanor completed a master's degree after her first divorce, and Lance completed high school and technical training.

Photography occupies much of Harry and Dana Kestner's time. They enjoy going on trips throughout the region looking for the mills that Harry likes to photograph. He is an insurance agent after years of being a minister in the Church of Christ. Dana takes care of the bookkeeping and accounting at a local church where they attend services every week. Their children are grown and married. They were both in long first marriages and took a lengthy break before getting married again; they have been married to each other for 8 years. Harry and Dana met several times while Dana's father was Harry's client, but it was Dana's daughter, who is Harry's secretary, who arranged for them to go on their first date.

Carol and Keith Pettigrew met at a dance. They each had long first marriages combined with a lengthy time of being single before they married 21 years ago. Keith is a retired engineer who completed post-graduate training in

anatomy and physiology. He utilized his engineering degree and medical training to develop a career at a local medical center creating computerized aids for severely disabled people. Carol had been married for over 30 years and was a homemaker when her husband asked for a divorce. She went to work outside the home for the first time when she was in her fifties as a social worker for the state department of human services. Carol and Keith spend their time reading, taking classes on writing, and volunteering. Keith just wrote a book. They are both battling some health problems but exhibit great attitudes about it. When asked recently how he was doing with his chemo and radiation therapy, Keith said he had played tennis that day "like a wild man."

Thus, 12 couples participated in the interviews and talked about their self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages. All exhibited positive attitudes, energy, and excitement about life. They enjoyed reminiscing about how they met and discussing their marriages.

Breaking Ground

Breaking the ground to begin the building of the new house is an exciting step in the process. Much work has already taken place. Experts have been consulted, blueprints have been prepared, permits have been secured, and budgets are in place. The groundbreaking is a big

milestone in the building process, but much work still lies ahead in order for the new house to become a reality. Building a house provides an opportunity for a couple to learn a great deal about the building process. Mistakes will be made but learning can come from mistakes. Learning from mistakes and experiences also takes place in building a relationship or a marriage.

Divorce Recovery

Ending a marriage involves a learning process that includes several steps. This includes completing a mourning process even if the marriage that is ending was an unhappy one (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996). All marriages, even those that are difficult, include dreams, expectations of a better life, companionship, and love. "Even if no tears are going to be shed for the lost partner, the symbolic meaning of the marriage should be gently put to rest" (p. 279). Missing the mourning step in the divorce recovery process mean that negative, unresolved feelings about the marriage can continue for many years (p. 279).

Even though it may be painful, evaluating the previous marriage provides a valuable look into the issues and conflicts that must be addressed in order to cope in a more positive way with future relationships (Hendrix, 1992). By taking an objective look at the previous marriage, there can

be an honest evaluation of what went wrong, including what the unmet expectations were and the reasons behind the choices that were made (p. 29).

By taking the time to complete this evaluation process and detaching from the marriage that is ending, a new identity or sense of self can be secured or re-claimed (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996). Particularly in long-term marriages, each marriage partner's sense of identity is tied to the spouse and to the marriage (p. 279). In many ways, couples have become their own entity which is different from being the individuals who entered the marriage (p. 279). Many people derive their main sense of who they are from their marriage. When the marriage ends in divorce a new sense of self needs to be built to replace the old identity (p. 280). Some people do this by reaching back to their early experiences to find other images and roots that lead to a new identity, while others try new experiences that lead to establishing a new sense of "self" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 280). It is very important for the divorcing person to let go of the messages received from the former partner -- particularly the ones that were critical, negative, or demeaning so that the old marital messages are not carried into the new relationships and ventures. Expecting failure can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (p.

280).

Rebuilding is the main psychological and social task of divorce, and the aforementioned steps are building blocks of the rebuilding process. The goal is to create a new, sustained adult relationship that will be better than the one left behind (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 281).

In finding postdivorce stability, a person must allow the memories and lessons of the past to co-exist peacefully with experiences in the present (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996). Like many processes, people do not necessarily follow each of these steps in sequence. They may revisit some of the steps they have already taken and work through them again, or they may work on several of them at once. New relationships need space created by a person's detaching from the old and being receptive to the new (p. 281).

Even if at the conclusion of the process, it is decided that the person married a "loser," responsibility needs to be taken for that choice. Some of the individuals interviewed for this study came to this conclusion. However, they still needed to take responsibility for the decision that they had made. Some felt a great deal of guilt about having made such a bad decision and had to work through the guilt in order to complete their divorce recovery process. Talia Wentz said, "It took me a long time

to be able to say about my first marriage and I had to be able to say this--I picked a loser. That took a lot. That reflects on me. So I got past some of those points, and then I could be released from some of the bondage that I put on myself."

One of the husbands mentioned that he experienced a grieving process when his marriage ended. He missed his wife and he particularly missed her daughter. He talked about this with the therapist he worked with after experiencing his second divorce.

> One of the things you have to go through is a grieving process. I don't care how mad or angry you are at that person, I think there is a lot of grieving when a marriage breaks up. You've lived with this person for many years and all of a sudden they're out of your life. Obviously you thought something about that person or you wouldn't have married them. Nobody ever talks about the grieving process and the loss. (Fred Hice)

Divorcing couples describe both a physical and a mental divorce and several participants mentioned that often these do not occur at the same time. One example is when the legal divorce is completed but one or both of the parties involved still experiences months or years of mentally processing the reality of the divorce. This includes realizing and understanding that the marriage is really over.

My mental divorce occurred after the physical

> divorce. But I reached the point where I had gone through both. I knew there was no way I was ever going back with my ex-husband. You couldn't have paid me to go back with him. I had done everything I could to make that marriage work. I had analyzed why it didn't work. Once I did that it helped me with the mental divorce. (Talia Wentz)

> The legal proceedings can take place at a different time than the whole mental thing. (Jenna Spicer)

For some, the physical divorce did not occur until years after the mental and emotional divorce had taken place. One or both of the individuals in the couple may work through the mental and emotional processes, and although they are divorced mentally and emotionally, they continue to live together and do not complete the legal divorce for many years. Sometimes this is due to waiting until the children are grown and out of the house. Other times it takes that much time for one or both of the individuals in the couple to arrive at a decision to go ahead and do the legal divorce. Dana Kestner and her first husband stayed legally married until the children were grown.

> The divorce worked out by trial and error. Trial and error. He would leave and then come back home. I couldn't go anywhere with three kids, but when the three kids were grown, I filed for divorce. It was scary. (Dana Kestner)

For others, the mental divorce process began years before the physical divorce actually took place due to a

disorienting dilemma which then led to a spiritual journey. In some cases, the disorienting dilemma can be a divorce, but in other cases it can be the death of a loved one, an illness, or another life-changing event. Jim Grandfork said, "At the time of my father's death, I knew that I had to come to grips with the fact that my life was very hollow and had very little meaning. That was the beginning of realizing something was missing." For Jim Grandfork, the disorienting dilemma was the death of his father which led him to embark on a spiritual learning journey that was transforming. This included participating in the Cursillo movement within the Episcopal Church. The Cursillo process includes working in groups to gain a deep spiritual understanding. Anita Grandfork came to a similar realization regarding her spiritual life and also began a spiritual journey and participated in the Cursillo movement in the Episcopal Church. Anita and John became friends as they both worked to improve their spiritual life.

While some of the participants experienced years of discontent in their marriages followed by spiritual searches that led to their divorces, others felt their marriages were reasonably happy and were stunned when their spouses left. Two of the wives' husbands left suddenly and already had new partners when they left. These two women were left with

newborn children and toddlers to care for and had a sense of being abandoned. For these women, the physical divorce came abruptly and was followed by a lengthy mental divorce process.

Two of the women expressed a feeling of freedom. They felt like they had been set free of a stifling experience when their marriage ended. They felt like they could make their own choices now that they were no longer married.

> When I got out of the courtroom, I felt like a bird that had been let out of its cage. I did a lot of things that were goofy, and some that were not too smart. But they were my decision to do. I really was gone most of the time somewhere from then on. I didn't stay home. I worked. On the weekend I had my friends who were also divorced, and we did things together. (Carol Pettigrew)

Anita Grandfork also used the bird analogy, "I felt like a bird freed from its cage. I went to K-Mart and bought a flowery comforter. The girls and I moved into this little, tiny house. Who cared? It was heaven."

Counseling

Every couple interviewed had at least one person who went to counseling during the divorce recovery process. Most of them worked on self-analysis issues. They needed the counseling experience to help with building their self-esteem and with learning how to do some things they had never done before like set boundaries for themselves.

My therapy wasn't about my marriage. I worked on

> myself. The purpose of my counseling experience was to help me build up my self esteem. I learned how to say no and set boundaries. I had to learn those things. (Dana Kestner)

Sometimes the counseling began with both spouses attending prior to their divorce, but both of them did not always continue the process. "My ex and I went to counseling. She lasted a few sessions, and I went for three years," said Rob White. "In therapy you look at how you respond to situations and act and react to all those things, and I pretty much changed who I was all the way around."

Some of the couples went to counseling after they were in their new, committed relationship and included their children and even their ex-spouses in the process. The counseling provided a way for everyone involved in the divorce and re-marriage relationships to participate in a positive, re-building and de-briefing process.

> We began seeing a therapist together and the therapist actually had a counseling session with the ex-spouses and later on with the children. We were in a unique situation and wanted to do the right thing for each other and our families so we decided to go into counseling. (Anita Grandfork)

All of the couples who participated in counseling recommended it as a positive experience that was worth doing. It helped them with the analysis of what had gone wrong, evaluate the choices they had made, and become more self-evolved, whole people. For Elizabeth Walters, "I spent

a year and a half in the wing back chair in the living room in a catatonic state and then I went into therapy for a couple of years. I think everybody should do that."

The Walters recommended the annulment process of the Catholic Church in which they participated as a way to do a thorough analysis of the marriage that has ended before entering into a subsequent marriage. They found the annulment process provided a way to look at the ending marriage with some objectivity. It also provided an opportunity for the couple in the new relationship to discuss their beliefs and values.

> We participated in the annulment process of the Catholic Church, and basically it forces you to examine yourself in and out. You look at your choices, and you go back and look at your childhood. It's pretty in-depth. It is a real closing process. When we were going through this, we would do a lot of writing, and then we would discuss with each other what we wrote. Then we would see the priest and discuss it. During these sessions, we would expand on what we had written about. The annulment process was one of the smartest things you could ever do. (Elizabeth Walters)

One of the benefits of participating in counseling and the self-analysis process prior to marrying again, was that the individuals felt like they were not looking for their new partner to complete them or make them happy. They had become more complete individuals who were satisfied with themselves. They did not need to be with someone else so

they would feel whole.

> I had learned who I was before I met Harry. I was satisfied with who I was and with what I could do by the time we met. I wasn't looking to Harry to fulfill anything, and I was perfectly happy. He was just fun...the icing on the cake. (Dana Kestner)

> You know the thing I liked the best about Preston when we met was the fact that he wasn't looking for a wife and he wasn't looking for someone to help him raise those three boys. (Elizabeth Walters)

Sharon White said, "Rob was puzzled that I didn't need a man to complete me and didn't need a man financially." Rob responded, "Actually, it was refreshing."

Two of the men who were interviewed knew that they wanted to marry a woman who was independent. They had learned from their first marriages that being married to a woman who was very dependent on them became a burden.

> I wanted an independent woman. Not a woman like my first wife who was like a noose around my neck. I didn't want that again. (Victor Wentz)

Half of the couples found that the time they spent in counseling and in analyzing their first marriages meant that when it was time to make a decision about marrying again, it was made quickly and decisively. They had spent time thinking about their previous marriages and what led to their divorces. They had addressed issues from childhood and assessed their priorities. They had become more complete as individuals. They knew they wanted to marry

again. Having completed this process, they married fairly quickly when they met the right person.

> If you go through the divorce recovery process in a healthy manner and come out on the other side learning a lot about yourself, then it's like you can't help but be a more successful person in your life no matter what you're doing. The key is going through that process. (Elizabeth Walters)

> We got married six months after we met. I think if you know what you're looking for and you've gotten your head together and recovered from the first relationship, you don't have to dilly-dally when you meet the right person. (Jenna Spicer)

Summary

Participating in the divorce recovery process led to the individuals becoming self-actualized people with a solid, inner foundation. A marriage with two individuals who have learned about themselves and have participated in a healthy, divorce recovery process leads to their having a marriage that is rich in depth with a solid foundation. Dan Brown described the depth in his marriage to Linda as a result of taking the time to complete the divorce recovery process.

> On the surface we're probably less "in love" than a lot of people who get married but our marriage has a lot of depth and is very spiritually rooted. But you can't start there. You have to have depth first individually before the seeds can grow as a couple. (Dan Brown)

Laying the Foundation: The Life Cycle

The foundation of the house sets the stage for the rest

of the building process. Pouring the foundation and securing it properly provides for a sturdy house that will not shift around even during storms or other natural disasters. For a couple building a relationship, building a firm foundation is very important. In addition to looking at their first marriages and evaluating what went wrong, the individuals in the couples may need to look back to determine what motivated them to marry for the first time as well as what their expectations were then. In addition, they may want to determine what their expectations are now and how the developmental stage they are in now may have an impact on them as a couple.

The couples interviewed described the events and circumstances that occurred when they married the first time. In the mid-twentieth century, many couples married because they thought that is what they were supposed to do at that stage in their life or because all of their friends were getting married at that time. Indeed, in earlier periods in American society it was reasonable to describe life as a series of predictable stages. More people seemed to experience the same events at the same ages. People knew the "right age" for marriage, the first child, the last child, career achievement, retirement, and even death (Rubash, Roodin, & Hoyer, 1995, p. 320). Life stage

development theorists outlined the developmental tasks of early adulthood. They include selecting a mate, starting a family, and getting started in an occupation (Havighurst, 1972).

Eight of the couples said they married for the first time at a young age and that they did not know themselves or each other very well. These same eight couples said they got married because it seemed like it was what they were supposed to do at that stage of their life whether it was graduation from high school or college. Two couples mentioned that everyone was getting married and then the husbands were going off to war -- for one couple that was World War II and for the other couple it was the Vietnam War.

> I graduated from high school and got married the same night. I was a baby. I had no clue but I thought I did. (Dana Kestner)

> We were so young when we got married that I wasn't a self-actualized person. (Mary Beth Taylor)

> Getting married young was fairly common. You don't know yourself. We turned out to be two totally different people. We didn't know ourselves. (Harry Kestner)

> I thought I had done all the growing up I would need to do. So many changes go on in your twenties. I really changed a lot. I got married in 1960 so it was the tail end of the 1950s ideal and along came womens' rights and the civil rights movement. I found myself changing considerably, and my husband changed not at all in his attitudes. That caused a lot of conflict.

(Eleanor Green)

Couples also said they got married the first time because it was (a) "the next thing to do," or (b) "it was time," or (c) "everyone else was getting married." As Carol Pettigrew stated, "At the time I got married for the first time, it was World War II and everyone was getting married and then the husbands were going off to war." Dan Brown said, "It was the last year of college and everyone was getting married. We had done all the right steps but we got to the happily ever after part and we weren't happy".

> I wanted to have a candlelight in my sorority. It's when somebody gets engaged and the sorority sisters get together in a circle and pass a candle around and sing a song. The girl who is engaged blows the candle out. Everybody screams and hugs the engaged girl. I wanted to do that. (Anita Grandfork)

Some of the couples described a kind of life cycle step that included marriage. Elizabeth Walters said, "We were married right out of college. Then we were paying off loans, having babies, getting our master's degrees. Then it's hit the big job, and all your dreams come true when you pay back the loan. Your second house is in Maple Ridge. And that's that."

Because of the norms that are associated with life cycle behaviors, some people do things because they are expected to do them or they are trying to fit into an ideal

picture of how things should be. Two individuals described getting married for other people, like their parents, for reasons such as having children, or romance. One person talked about trying to meet expectations.

> Earlier in life I had an ideal picture of how things should be and I tried to keep meeting that. Then the expectations were not met. (Cathy Keilor)

> My first husband and I were in college together. I was a cheerleader, and he was a football player. We were always in groups. We traveled in a group of friends. They all got married at the same time and had children at the same time. I realized I got married for everyone else. Part of why I got married because I wanted desperately to have children. As a little girl, I always wanted to be a mother. I've learned in retrospect that in a way, I used my first husband to an extent in order to fulfill that need to be a mother. (Anita Grandfork)

> My Dad encouraged me to marry her because he knew what a wild hair I was and he thought marriage would settle me down. (Jim Grandfork)

> It was a college romance. He left to go in the Air Force and went to Vietnam. We had a long distance relationship. He proposed and then left. We didn't live together at first. We didn't need to -- it was all romance. It was 1962, and it was a romantic thing. You got married, and that's what you were supposed to do. (Jenna Spicer)

Some couples thought things would change after they married for the first time or that the person they married would change or that they would change their partner. In another instance, the participant knew that things didn't feel quite right when he married his first wife, but he

thought things would be different after they married. Once they were married, the participant kept thinking things would get better and that they would change, but that did not happen.

> I thought, she has a lot of good qualities and [this is a terrible premise] the things I don't like -- I am going to change her. Dumbest thing in the world. (Jim Grandfork)

> One of the biggest things I learned when you are swept along and you find someone and you get married and you're real young - you think, that doesn't seem right but when we are married it will change. In my first marriage there was a lot of thinking that it will get better, that it will change. (Dan Brown)

One couple mentioned biological needs that the young experience along with the Puritanical background in the United States that says people have to be married before they can have sex. This ideal was particularly pervasive during the decades of the 1940s, 1950s and even into the 1960s, prior to the introduction of the birth control pill. In addition, young girls during that time often felt that if they slept with their boyfriends that they have to marry him.

> There is a biological problem when you're young. The hormones are flowing at a young age and in America we've got that Puritanical background that says sex is taboo until you get married. That was one way to legitimize the process. That's what you did to make it legitimate to satisfy those needs. (Fred Hice)

> You're supposed to only sleep with one man. So now

> that you've slept with him you have to marry him. (Karen Hice)

Several couples described the unrealistic expectations they had when they were newly married at a young age. They had an ideal picture of how life would be when they married. It was during this time that people grew up watching television with its idealistic portrayals of married and family life. Shows such as "Leave it to Beaver," "Father Knows Best," and "The Ricky Nelson Show," were popular at this time and provided unrealistic pictures of families. Mothers cleaned house in high heels and pearls and families appeared to be idyllically happy. Little disagreements and problems were solved by the end of each show. Young people watching these shows derived unrealistic pictures of what life would be like when they were married.

The couples also described having more realistic expectations of marriage and of each other now that they were older. Age had helped them understand more about what was important in life. They had learned to concentrate on those important things while they became more relaxed about little annoyances.

> When you get married for the first time, you have unrealistic expectations. Americans tend to think that their spouse is going to meet all of their needs. (Frank Taylor)

> Earlier in life I had an ideal picture of how things should be and I tried to keep meeting that

> expectation. As you age, your expectations change and you become more realistic. (Carol Pettigrew)
>
> As you age your expectations change and you become more realistic. (Cathy Keiler)
>
> You are not concerned with little idiosyncracies like you were the first marriage. I am more tolerant of little things in my second marriage than I was in my first marriage. (Preston Winters)

Five of the couples discussed the aging process and its effect on their successful marriages. The couples in this study also talked about how their successful subsequent marriages are affected in a positive way because they are older and more relaxed. This may be due to sex-role crossover, which begins for most people in their forties and continues throughout the rest of the life span (Pearson, 1994). Both women and men experience this crossover that encourages women to become more masculine and men to become increasingly feminine. One example of this is grandfathers who are highly nurturing to their grandchildren, even though they were not so caring in their attention to their own children. Another example is the increasing numbers of older women who find successful careers after the age of forty (p. 104).

According to Carl Jung, a healthy adult personality involves finding a balance among various parts including the polarities of masculinity and femininity (Rybash, Roodin, & Hoyer, 1995). In early adulthood there is a decided

imbalance between the two, so that one of these components dominates to the exclusion of the other. Masculinity or femininity predominates at this time because of society's coercive sex-role stereotyping or modeling. Usually the dominant orientation to masculinity or femininity matches one's biological sex. By middle age, however, masculinity and femininity become more balanced as males become more expressive of their feminine characteristics like nurturance and females become more express of their masculine attributes like assertiveness. By old age, a healthy equilibrium often exists in the personality components of masculinity and femininity. Older males and females see this balance in themselves and recognize their personalities as consisting of both masculine and feminine features (p. 44).

Some data suggest that by middle age, males and females become increasingly aware of new or hidden aspects of their personalities and identities (Rubash, roodin, & Hoyer, 1995). This includes an increase in the incorporation of opposite-sex characteristics including finding a greater expression and acceptance of nurturance for both older men and women. It seems that both men and women become more aware of personality components they have not fully recognized, fostered, or expressed as they grow older (p.

45).

Six of the couples interviewed for the study felt that they are more tolerant of little idiosyncracies and able to look past them now that they are older. Elizabeth Walters said, "I think some of it has to do with just getting older and more relaxed. It's part of the aging process." Dana Kestner thinks her husband, Harry, has improved with age.

> Harry and I have talked about how he was kind of cocky when he was a young man and he thinks I would have blown him off in a heartbeat when he was 18. As he's grown older, he's mellowed, and he's a romantic now. (Dana Kestner)

Elizabeth Winters found out what was important in a spouse. "In the second marriage, you sort of revise your list of what you want in a husband. You find out what really isn't important."

The Walters said that if they had asked themselves some of the same questions they addressed after their first marriages failed, they might not have married for the first time. Elizabeth Walters believed strongly that "the questions we answered for the annulment process were probably things you should do before you get married the first time. We probably wouldn't have married the first time if we had done that." Preston Walters said, "If my ex and I had filled all that out, there wouldn't have been a first marriage."

Testing for Solidity and Safety

Inspections and testing are part of the process of building a house. There are safety codes as well as codes for structural integrity to follow to assure that the house provide a safe place for its inhabitants. Inspectors from local government agencies will routinely inspect the building to assure that the safety standards are being met. When couples have experienced previous marriages, they may feel a need to do some testing as well.

Three of the couples used the word "test" during their interviews. Typically, this meant that one of the individuals in the couple felt the need to test their partner prior to getting married. This was because they had learned not to trust their prior spouses as a result of incidents that had occurred in these marriages. When they begin to try new relationships, new roles, and new solutions to old problems in the relationship arena, they often find they do not have confidence in their own judgment (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 281). They may feel that they cannot trust themselves to make a good judgment about a new partner. That can lead to them feeling the need to test their new partner to make sure that person does not have the same untrustworthy behaviors as their previous spouse.

> There's things you do to test. The tests drive away people who aren't true and brings them out of

> the woodwork and then you know. It may be hard and it may be real difficult, but it makes you feel more comfortable because you know you can fully trust and you can fully accept a lot of things because you know they've passed the test. (Cathy Keilor)

John Carter said that he felt both Cathy and her son tested him many times before they felt they could trust him. The Carters likened the testing of the relationship to the tests endured by people living in rural settings such as theirs. "We are rural people, and crises are seen as tests. A drought is a test. The test is to see if there is a way to get through it."

Sometimes the testing of the new relationship required much patience on the part of the partner being tested. The testing is about not being sure the new partner can be trusted. The experience of the prior marriage makes it difficult to trust anyone, particularly a new, potential marriage partner. The new partner has to be very patient and very consistent in order to earn the trust of the other person. The person with the trust issues wants to be sure the new partner is not like the person in the prior marriage. Yet, sometimes, in a contradictory manner, the person wants the new partner to be like the person in the prior marriage.

> There was a time when Linda wasn't interested in being with anyone. I butted in and started chinking away at the brick wall. In that sense

> she tested me. If I hadn't been committed to her, I wouldn't have stayed around. Just because it wasn't something she was looking for and with the baggage from the first divorce plus the kids from the first marriage. I had to be patient, committed. I told her many times. "I am not going away." Trust was a big issue. I told Linda, "you will just have to learn, and I will have to show you that you can trust me and that I'm not going anywhere." There was a time when it was not easy. I had to fight my way in. A less determined person might have just given up and moved on. (Dan Brown)

Linda said, "I was hard on Dan for not being Peter and hard on him because I didn't want him to be like Peter. Eventually I learned, and I am still learning. Something will pop up, and Dan will say, 'Hello, I'm still not him!'"

Talia Wentz wanted her new mate to be good at fixing things, or a "handyman" as she termed it, so she tested Victor to see if he really was skilled at fixing things. She said, "He came over and my car was broken. It was cold, and he fixed my car." Victor said, "I didn't realize this whole time I was being tested." Talia continued, "I was thinking, let me see if he is going to go out and fix my car in the cold. He has these real soft hands. I thought, that he is not a handyman with those soft hands. So he passed that test."

Talia also felt strongly that she did not want to date Victor just for the fun of it. She was interested in a serious relationship and felt that if he was not interested

in the same thing, she preferred not to continue seeing him. She said, "Then, I went for the real test." Once again Victor said, "I didn't know I was being tested." This testing process went as follows:

> Talia: It was our second date, and we went to lunch. I could hardly eat. I had something I wanted to say so I could get a reaction out of him. He was eating away like a soldier and I said, "Vic, I know this sounds funny but I love you."
>
> He stopped eating. Then I picked up my fork and I started eating like a soldier. He didn't eat another bite.
>
> Victor: Even though I wanted to be married, I thought, "What have I done to make this girl like me?" I didn't want to mislead anybody. What have I done here? I didn't know if the feelings were mutual. She told me and I couldn't eat anymore. But you know, this is day two. This is our second day!
>
> Talia: I am warning him by telling him this. I don't want a boyfriend -- I want to know how serious he is. What are his intentions? He could have walked out the door right then, and I would have been fine.
>
> Vincent: I was at work, but I kept thinking about her and I longed to talk to her. I picked up the phone and called her the next day. This was day five and I just asked her to marry me. Is that crazy or what? That was fifteen years ago.
> (Talia and Victor Wentz)

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCTING THE FRAMEWORK: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

When constructing a home, everything builds on everything else. There is a relationship between laying a solid foundation and the proper framing of the house. If these are not done correctly, problems will occur in installing the plumbing fixtures, the electrical wiring and the sheet rock for the walls. Likewise, a marriage is built upon relationship-enhancing communication that includes workable ways to handle conflict and different communication styles. In addition, a marriage benefits from the foundation of a relationship with a spiritual faith shared by the couple. Finally, subsequent marriages that include children involve developing relationships with the children so they feel comfortable and secure.

Relationship-Enhancing Communication

An understanding of the communication process may be the most important factor in achieving a happy marriage (Pearson, 1993). Understanding marital communication is important because it is largely through interaction that marriages are satisfying or dissatisfying. Communication is

defined as the process in which people creatively interpret verbal and nonverbal cues to establish shared meanings. Understanding and sharing are basic to the communication process. Meaning is gained when couples socially interact with each other. The meaning continually changes and shifts as each of them responds to interactions and as understandings change. Communication, defined this way, is vital to a satisfying family life (p. 7).

Faulty communication can pull down an otherwise sturdy marriage (Parrott, 1995). When communication is poor, both partners struggle to convey what they want or need in the relationship, never realizing they are speaking a language the other does not comprehend. Over time, because of the disappointment, the partners erect defenses against each other, and become guarded. They stop confiding in each other, wall off parts of themselves, and withdraw emotionally from the relationship. They cannot talk without blaming, so they stop listening. One spouse might leave, but if both stay they live together in an emotional divorce (p. 73).

What makes communication so important in a marriage, is that it is the way a couple expresses themselves to each other whether it is about everyday tasks or profound feelings. Communication is the vehicle through which

couples voice disagreements and solve problems.

> Talk is the substance of a loving relationship. Talk enables lovers to exchange feelings and make agreements about their day-to-day life. It is the way each couple develops their agreements about how decisions are to be made and carried out, how disputes are settled, and how they will deal with each other (Phillips & Goodall, 1983, p. 11).

It is not the specific communication behaviors that happy couples utilize that is important (Pearson, 1994). What is important is their interpretation of their interactions. Studies are suspect that suggest happiness in marriage is related to specific communication skills, such as confessing intimate details of life, listening in certain ways, and resolving conflict with specific resolution techniques. What works well in one marriage may provide the opposite effect in another (p. 20).

Every couple in the study mentioned communication as they described what they learned that contributes to the success of their marriages. When these couples said they have good communication, they meant one or more of the following: (a) they have few communication impasses (b)they are able to talk easily about difficult subjects, (c) they feel they understand each other, (d) they withhold very little from each other, (e) they are able to ask for what they need from their partners by using direct requests, (f) they have the skills and ability to work through conflicts.

> People wear different masks at different times because everyone wants to be liked and you don't want to reveal your real self. I learned that I do wear masks. But you can't keep not being real with each other in the marriage. (Jenna Spicer)
>
> I feel like I'm a good communicator in my marriage. I'm pretty much very straightforward, very direct. (Sharon White)
>
> I learned that there needed to be a willingness to change and a willingness to talk things through. (Frank Taylor)

In addition, the couples learned to utilize or at least be aware of a variety of communication styles, particularly related to gender communication styles. The couples have learned about conflict management, gender communication styles, and the importance of being direct in communicating their needs to their spouses from books, workshops, counselors, and even magazine articles.

Getting Acquainted

A majority of the couples said that they talked about a variety of subjects and asked each other many questions when they were first getting to know each other. They talked about what was important to them, about their values, and about what they wanted to do differently in their subsequent marriage. Expectations of a partner and marriage were discussed as well. Dan Brown commented, "There was lots of conversing between us. When we first started dating, Linda was very honest about what she felt and about the baggage

she had from her first marriage, her expectations, and the kids. We talked a lot."

> We talked incessantly early on and while we were engaged and then after we married. We used to have family meetings once a week. We started those shortly after we married to include the kids in on why we were doing the things we were doing. We wanted to apprise them and let them have some controlled input. They had their say. Then we explained. They had a lot of questions about their dad and about our rules and about money. (Jenna Spicer)

Lance and Eleanor Green discussed their likes and dislikes and things they would and would not do prior to getting married. In addition, they discussed things that had bothered them in their first marriages. They participated in this exchange:

> Lance: "Eleanor said she didn't make breakfast and I said that's okay, I don't make beds."
>
> Eleanor: "We really did discuss a lot of things. A major problem for Lance in the first marriage was that his wife was always late. He made it very clear that it bothered him. I try very hard not to be late. We talk about how we're doing. We talk a lot. Oh my gosh, my first marriage was never like this. We have something to compare it to. It re-affirms your relationship when you do discuss those things."

Handling Conflict

Nine of the couples discussed their difficulties with communicating in their prior marriages and with handling conflict. In their prior marriages, they did not know how to work through conflict and kept problems to themselves. Others felt like they were not heard by their spouses.

After a period of time of feeling like they were not being heard, they stopped voicing their thoughts and feelings to their spouses.

> We didn't fight. Probably one of the reasons we divorced is because we never cleared the air. (Jenna Spicer)

> My ex and I didn't communicate very well. She talked at me and didn't talk to me. When I gave her the wrong answer she would proceed to tell me that was the wrong answer and what the right answer was. Since my efforts at communication were futile I stopped communicating in my first marriage. (Rob White)

Actually, it is not possible to "not communicate." By not talking, Rob was sending a very clear message to his first wife by not talking to her. Rattling pots in the kitchen or slamming a door provides a spouse with a clear message even though these non-verbal communication cues do not involve words (Tannen, 1990).

Learning ways to work through problems and to handle conflict was mentioned by eight of the couples. Misunderstanding is a natural part of marriage (Parrott, 1995). No matter how deeply a man and woman love each other, they will eventually have conflict. It is unrealistic to expect that both people will always want the same thing at the same time so conflict in marriage is inevitable. It is knowing how to fight fair that is critical to a happy, successful marriage (p. 113). Research

studies document that how couples handle disagreements is very important to a happy marriage (Markman, Stanley, Floyd, Hahlweg, Blumberg, 1992, p. 59). Many couples do not know how to handle conflict (Parrott, 1995). Some mistake calmness and quiet for marital harmony and go out of their way to smooth over differences without really resolving them. Others learn the wrong ways of fighting and their arguments quickly degenerate into insults and abuse (p. 113). "Gender differences in conflict resolution is important in stable marriages. Marriages were more likely to last when husbands could accept influence from their wives and de-escalate the conflict and when wives used softened startup techniques in conflict situations" (Carrere & Gottman, 1998, p. 19).

In this study, eight of the couples said they had learned to manage conflict in their successful marriages. They felt like there was always going to be conflict and that it was essential to have the skills to work through problems. One study found that unhappy married couples experienced an average of one conflict a day, but more satisfied and stable couples experienced one conflict only every five days (Vincent, Weiss, & Birchler, 1975).

Particular patterns of interaction separate satisfied from dissatisfied couples (Cupach & Canary, 2000). One

pattern among dissatisfied couples is a series of interactions in which one person complains and the other person defends himself or herself. Dissatisfied couples often engage in a long series of these complain-defend interactions; 10 exchanges of such messages is not uncommon! She also found that satisfied couples do not engage in such patterns. Instead, satisfied couples engage in more confirming sequences of conflict interaction (pp. 8-9).

Three of the couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages described in specific terms how they felt about handling conflict. They expressed their reluctance to discuss difficult issues at times. Some of them had grown up in families where problems were never discussed so they had to learn that it was all right, in fact, desirable, to bring up problems and talk about them. Some of the individuals in the study were less reluctant to discuss difficult issues but not because they enjoyed doing this. They had learned from their previous marriages that it was important to work through problems instead of ignoring them and hoping they would go away. The Taylors had some stories about how difficult it was for them to handle challenging issues.

> Frank: "I'm the one who suppresses things. Mary Beth always wants to fight. I don't like conflict. We have some great conflict stories."

> Mary Beth: "I don't like conflict but I like to get it all out. One time we were arguing in the bedroom and Frank literally got under the covers all the way. Another time Frank was in the tub and we were having a disagreement and he went under the water. We've had to learn to get things out and fight instead of just keeping it in. I think conflict is good but not too much of it." (Mary Beth and Frank Taylor)

Linda Brown agreed that it is difficult to discuss problems sometimes. This can be because problems weren't discussed openly in an individual's family of origin and it may also happen because of the way conflict was handled in the individual's first marriage.

> Putting things on the table is really hard. My family never talked about anything. My first husband would lie. He would lie just to not have conflict. So we have had to learn to handle conflict. Sometimes you have to get things out. (Linda Brown)

Sharon and Rob White discussed their typical approach to handling a conflicting situation which involves several steps. Each of them described their version of the situation. Based on their understanding of the description, they each might each change their ideas about the conflict. When they are each able to change some of their ideas, it leads to coming to a satisfactory solution. However, sometimes they agree to disagree because neither of them are able to change their perspective on the problem even after they have each described their perception of it.

Typically, if there is an issue or something comes

> up, we'll bring it up, and we'll start chewing on it. As a rule, the vast majority of the time she will present her version, and I will present my version. Some of the things that she says will change some of my perceptions, and some of the things I say will change some of her perceptions. We'll get to a place where we are comfortable with it. There's been a few times that I just couldn't get to her position, and we couldn't get close to it. So we agreed to disagree. (Rob White)

Pearson (1992) interviewed over 40 couples who had been in long, happy marriages that had lasted 40 and 50 years. From her interviews she determined that couples that are happily married realize that they are going to have disagreements and they figure out ways to come to agreements. She summed up what these couples said in their interviews about conflict this way:

> Happy couples acknowledge that conflict is inevitable, and they seek methods appropriate for them to resolve their differences. They use a wide range of resolution techniques (p. 159).

Couples who positively distort their partner's communicative behavior are more satisfied with their marriage than couples who do not distort their partner's behavior (Pearson, 1992). In other words, to the extent couples perceive their partner's behavior uniquely and favorably, they also rate their marital satisfaction more favorably (p. 74). People who view events more favorably consistently view both their partner's communicative behavior and their marital satisfaction more favorably. Indeed, long-term happily

married couples view their partner, their marriage, and other events as highly positive. Even in the face of difficult times, health problems, death and other disasters these couples maintain their positive outlook (Pearson, 1992, p.77).

Communication Activities

The couples also described activities in which they participated that help to increase opportunities for communication to take place in their marriage. This included having dinner together on a regular basis and even preparing and cleaning up from the meal together. It also included participating in an activity together often.

> Eating is extraordinary communication. Having dinner together every night keeps the lines of communication open. Also, we participate in ballroom dancing which is not only good exercise, it requires additional communication to cooperate at that level. (Jenna Spicer)

While some couples do not necessarily sit down to discuss their marriage or the state of their relationship, it is their talk about projects and their work together that keeps the communication going. Examples of this are the talk they participate in when they both read the same book or when they take a class together that keeps them communicating.

> We rarely sit down to discuss our "relationship". If it's not the ranch or the sheep, it's about a design idea for jewelry or a leather vest idea. We have a lot to talk about. We talk about the museum where Cathy is employed and the latest exhibit project. (John Keilor)

Gender Communication Styles

Three of the couples mentioned that it is helpful to be aware of gender-related differences in communication styles between men and women.

> In spite of the fact that the roles, opportunities, and attainments of men and women have become more similar over the past thirty years, notable gender differences still remain in how husbands and wives function in close personal relationships. Men and women both have strong needs for being loved and valued by another person. But the way they express closeness, communicate, and deal with conflicts often differs significantly (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002, p. 276).

What are the differences between men and women in conversational styles, and why do they exist? Many of the differences in male-female communication styles can be traced back to the different needs of men and women regarding intimacy and independence (Tannen 1990).

> Intimacy is key in a world of connection where individuals negotiate complex networks of friendship, minimize differences, try to reach consensus, and avoid the appearance of superiority, which would highlight differences. In a world of status, independence is key, because a primary means of establishing status is to tell

> others what to do, and taking orders is a marker of low status. Though all humans need both intimacy and independence, women tend to focus on intimacy and men focus on independence (Tannen, 1990, p. 26).

Conversation is a way of achieving intimacy or connections for women and independence or status for men (Tannen, 1990). Since men and women have different purposes in conversation, they are often disappointed when their expectations are not met. Women typically say that they communicate with their spouses as a way of getting close or connecting with them. They enjoy the intimacy derived from sharing feelings, talking about personal issues and having in-depth conversations with their female friends. Men, on the other hand, typically don't use conversation as a way of getting close. For them, conversation is more purposeful and goal oriented. Doing things together, such as participating in activities such as team sports, encourages connections for men (pp. 26-30).

It is no wonder that men and women often have trouble understanding each other's way of achieving closeness (Tannen, 1990). Some wives say that their husbands rarely talk but when they do the topics are subjects such as business, sports, cars, and politics. Since women may find these topics to be superficial or boring, they tend to feel isolated, unsatisfied, and determined to "work on the

relationship" by talking about the problem. Frequently, this type of discussion results in husbands withdrawing, which women view as the ultimate rejection (pp. 83-84).

Another difference in male and female conversational styles is that when talking about personal problems, women typically want to feel understood (Tannen, 1990). In contrast to women's desire for empathy when talking about personal problems, men feel the need to fix things, and do so by offering solutions. Usually these solutions are not well accepted because they give the message "do something about it" rather than "I know what you mean." Women then say men do not listen, are not caring, and are insensitive. This response confuses the men who are just wanting to help. Women define communication by the female standard of verbalizing and not through action. They want their spouses to talk to them in their familiar "female" style. They often overlook, discredit, or misinterpret "masculine" forms of communication (pp. 51-53.)

Four of the couples found that adopting a variety of conversational styles was helpful in their marriages. At the very least, being aware of the reasons for the differences in conversational styles of men and women was useful. The White's found that they do not exhibit the typical "male" and "female" conversational styles. They have

each adopted the typical conversational style of the other gender.

> Sharon: "Rob has more of a traditional female style of communicating and was raised by a single female and his sister."
>
> Rob: "We are backwards here. Sharon has the male role and I utilize the female role in terms of communication.
>
> Sharon: "Rob said one day 'if you don't know I'm not going to explain it to you.'
>
> Rob: "Sharon works in a male-dominated profession. She couldn't survive in that profession if she didn't have a male type of conversation style.

Dan and Linda Brown addressed the topic of gender communication and differences in styles as well. Dan said, "Linda is much more emotional than I am and very disorganized, too. I had to learn to be aware of these differences and work with them."

Anita Grandfork and Linda Brown both said they had learned to be more direct with their partners than they had been in their first marriages. They found that it was more effective to make direct requests about their needs instead of using indirect methods. Typically, women grow up learning to make requests in an indirect manner instead of directly stating what they need.

> I've learned that I need to just say my feelings. (Anita Grandfork)
>
> Be direct, be open. If you are not communicating you are walking down a dark path. (Linda Brown)

Active Listening

A very large part of the communication process is listening (Parrott, 1995). Active listening involves concentrating on what the other person is really saying and includes paying attention to non-verbal communication, rather than thinking about what is going to be said next and judging the other person. When those involved in a conversation utilize active listening, it can be very validating and more information can be gathered about the topic being discussed (p. 82).

Two participants talked about the importance of active listening. Jenna, who teaches communication classes and has two degrees in the subject, talked about listening and how important it is to a relationship. "Listening without judging is such a crucial skill. It's a gift you can give to your partner." Anita Grandfork mentioned how important it is to pay attention to her partner's non-verbal signals. "Learn to recognize each other's signals and non-verbal cues. For example, my beloved makes certain quiet noises that are combined with stretching when he gets tired."

Sources for Learning

Adults often apply their learning to real-life situations (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 64). During the interviews, couples would discuss the real-life learning in

which they engaged in order to learn about themselves and about how to communicate with their partners. For example, the Walters mentioned how valuable they found the annulment process of the Catholic Church in evaluating and coming to closure about their previous marriages. The annulment process fostered a great deal of communication within the couple about their first marriages as well as what they wanted from their own marriage. The forms of communication included both of them writing about the topics individually and then reading each others' writing. Then they talked at length about what they had written and how they felt about the topics included in their writings. After that, they met with the priest together and talked further about their writings and discussions. They found it helpful to have these discussions with an objective, third person.

Ron and Jenna Spicer discussed the Marriage Encounter experience at length. Not only did they enjoy their Marriage Encounter experience and the enhanced communication that resulted, they also were facilitators in the program for over 15 years. They found that Marriage Encounter was for couples who already had good marriages but wanted to enhance their communication as partners. They learned that it is important to be authentic with each other as a couple and to reveal their real selves to each other. As

facilitators, they had to discuss very difficult topics like death and living alone after death. These are topics that people do not typically talk about as couples and they found this fostered intimacy and closeness.

> A lot of people who saw us before and after the first Marriage Encounter said we were so different when we came back and the kids noticed, too. We were communicating in a different way. We had to write out the talks that we were going to present. It was really excellent because it forced us to talk about things that you never talk about like death. You never talk about death and what it's going to be like when we are alone. We had to face some issues that we normally wouldn't have wanted to face in order to present the talks. (Jenna Spicer)

Communication During Interviews

The participants not only talked about the importance of communication in marriage and the importance of being respectful of their partners, they demonstrated it during the interviews. The researcher was able to observe them treating each other with great respect and using their listening skills with each other as they talked about their marriages. This demonstrated that they had incorporated this learning in their interactions with each other.

The couples communicated tremendous respect for each other when they were being interviewed and they demonstrated that they utilized the active listening skills they described as being important. The researcher noticed that they would check in with each other as they talked. Anita Grandfork would ask her husband, Jim, "Is that your interpretation? Is that what you think?" She would check in with him and turn the conversation over to him if she had been talking for awhile.

Couples would get excited about what they were talking about. The Spicer's would talk back and forth. The minute one of them was done talking the other would jump right in. They didn't interrupt each other but talked interchangeably back and forth. The Wentz's were both excited about their topic and Victor excitedly began to interrupt Talia. She turned to him, took both his hands in hers, and said, "I want to hear what you have to say but I'd like to finish my story. Don't forget that thought, okay?" She took the conversation back from him very lovingly and with great consideration. He waited until she finished her turn and then made his point.

Summary

The couples in the self-identified, successful marriages described what they learned about relationship-

enhancing communication in the interviews completed for this study. Relationship-enhancing communication is essential in a successful marriage because it is largely through communication interaction that marriages are satisfying or dissatisfying. These couples spent a great deal of time talking about their values and beliefs, likes and dislikes, and hopes and goals before they entered into their subsequent marriages. This was in contrast to their first marriages in which there were many unspoken expectations and little discussion about their hopes, goals and dreams prior to the wedding. The couples learned that conflict in marriage is inevitable but in their successful marriages they are able to work out their own constructive ways of handling conflict when it occurs. The importance of making time to participate in activities that foster communication like preparing and eating meals together on a regular basis was something else that the couples said they learned. They also learned to be aware of and adopt different communication styles and be aware of gender differences in communication. Active listening was something they learned to practice when communicating with each other. They not only talked about these successful communication behaviors, but they also exhibited them during the interviews; they were very respectful of each other when they talked about

their marriages. They were good listeners and attentive to the non-verbal communication exhibited by their partners.

The Safe Room

No single factor seems to do more to cultivate oneness and a meaningful sense of purpose in marriage than a shared commitment to spiritual discovery (Parrot, 1995, p. 135). For married couples, spiritual meaning should be a shared pursuit (Leckey, 1985, p. 227). While every individual comes to an understanding of life's meaning alone, couples discover and develop the meaning of their marriage together. When researchers examined the characteristics of happy couples who had been married for more than two decades, one of the most important qualities they found was faith in God and spiritual commitment. Religion provides couples with a shared sense of values, ideology, and purpose that bolsters their partnership" (Parrot, 1995, p. 137).

Master-faith learners have found that they experience "positive benefits to their marriages through their faith. They believe that their faith has kept them from walking away or getting a divorce in times of difficulty" (Geerdes, p. 24, 2003). The master-faith learners said that their trust in God was the reason they sought help from the Bible, the church, and other resources instead of giving up on their marriages.

The Bible "is still the greatest handbook on human behavior; when two people are related to the God of the Bible and to His Word, they will find that His principles will aid them in their spiritual adjustment" (LaHaye, 2002, p. 1). Five areas related to spiritual adjustment can help to make marriages more solid (p. 1). They are (a) consistent Christian behavior within the home, (b) aiding family relationships through life in the church, (c) strengthening marriages through Christian service and witness to others, (d) spending time together with God through prayer is a powerful influence in the home, and (e) forgiveness offered to each other helps to remove anger and bitterness (LaHaye, 2002, pp. 1-2). Thus, spiritual growth and learning such as that of master-faith learners can aid in stronger marriages (Geerdes, 2003, p. 24).

Research supports couples worshiping together as a means of nurturing the soul of a marriage (Parrott, 1995). Couples who attended church together even as little as once a month increase their chances of staying married for life. Studies have also shown that churchgoers feel better about their marriages than those who do not worship together. Worship has a way of transforming relationships (p. 142).

Five of the couples talked about having roots in the church or in a deep, shared spirituality.

> We're not wildly religious people but the church is at the heart of what we do. I do think that one of our successes is that we've been in church together and we raised the kids in the church. It's a great home. (Jenna Spicer)

The involvement in the church the couples described varied. For example, it included such things as (a) support provided to the two young mothers whose husbands left them with infants and toddlers and no job, (b) providing a vehicle for divorced people to get to know each other as friends, and (c) providing the foundation of their life together as a couple and for those with children, for their life together as a family.

Jim and Anita Grandfork each grew up in the Episcopal Church. They continue to attend regularly and participate in church activities as a couple.

> We are both cradle Episcopalians. I had grown up in the parish. Once I was an adult I wasn't as active as I had been. When my Dad died and I had a 6-year-old son, I thought I needed to go back to church for my son, but I learned that really I needed to go back to church for myself. My wife did not attend church with me and my son. (Jim Grandfork)

Anita Grandfork said that after growing up in the Episcopal Church she realized that she was not in a Christian marriage and needed to make a choice about whether to allow that to continue or to seek a spiritual life again.

> I realized I was not in a Christian marriage. I was at a fork in the road. I could choose to stay in that situation and live my life that way, or I

> could choose the opposite which was terrifying. My husband was not interested in joining in the spiritual journey with me. He was raised in a church and became an Episcopalian, but that was largely because my dad was a priest. My husband did not want me to grow spiritually, and in reflection, I learned that he saw it as a threat. That made me even more determined to grow spiritually. (Anita Grandfork)

Both Jim and Anita participated in the Episcopal Cursillo movement which provides a process for people who are already Christians to enhance their spirituality. Anita said, "It is a renewal movement for people who are already Christians and want to empower and enhance their spirituality. It is not for people who are searching." While Anita and Jim Grandfork were participating in the Cursillo movement, they became friends. Twenty years later they look back at their participation in the Cursillo movement and feel it was a good way for them to get to know each other as friends even though that was not the purpose for their participation. This couple began getting acquainted and became friends in a church group they joined with the goal of spiritual growth.

> The structure of the Cursillo was a good way to get to know each other. We didn't know each other at all in our first marriage, and we married the first time for the wrong kind of reason. The Cursillo gave us a chance to get to know each other as friends. An important part of the Cursillo movement is to participate in regular group meetings. It's a group of Christian friends who meet to discuss their spiritual growth and help each other in that process. (Anita Grandfork)

The church was a source of assistance and support to two of the women whose divorces came suddenly and unexpectedly. Both Linda Brown and Jenna Spicer benefitted from the support the church provided to them when their husbands left unexpectedly. Linda had two sons, one was 9 months old and the other was 4 years old. Jenna also 9 an infant son and her older boy was 4 as well. Both Jenna and Linda, who were full time stay-at-home mothers, said they were in shock when their husbands left. During this difficult time, both Linda and Jenna found great support from the church. Linda's church provided her with a part-time job after her husband left her. The church provided Linda and Jenna with spiritual support and a home with friends who cared about them. Linda said, "It was a big shock when my husband left us. Zack was a baby and Josh was four. I went to work part time in the children's ministry. I was still nursing and had no job so the church helped me. I don't know what I would have done without the support of the church."

> I went back to the church during the divorce. It literally saved my life. I had to be there. You get your batteries recharged. I couldn't make it on my own, certainly not with the children, so that was an essential part of my life. I did tell Ron when we first started dating. He asked what was important to me. I told him that the next person that is important to me will participate in the church. (Jenna Spicer)

The church also provided support to Talia and Victor after their divorces in the form of a Bible study group. Talia and Victor were each looking for more information about the Bible and each of them were referred to a Bible study group by friends from work. In the process of attending the Bible study group, and seeking more information about the Bible, their teacher suggested that they meet. Victor said, "After my divorce, a work friend invited me to join her Bible study group and the teacher, Billie, wanted me to meet another member of the Bible study group, Talia. Now, Talia and I participate in a Bible study and Billie is our mentor." Talia knew that she wanted her future husband to know the Bible. She said, "The only thing I had as a requirement was that he had to be a Christian and know the word of God better than I did, and he had to be a handyman. The rest I knew what I didn't want."

The couples who mentioned the church provided a foundation for their successful, subsequent marriages had experienced attending church without their spouses during their first marriages. They felt this did not work very well. It promoted the husband and wife each going their separate ways. Ron Spicer knew that he did not want to be sitting at home reading the newspaper while the rest of the family went to church without him. Jenna had said that her

first husband did not participate in church with her. Ron stated, "When we got together, there were a couple of things that I asked to have happen. One was that we always go to church together although I didn't belong to the Episcopal Church. I joined when we got married."

For several couples, the church provides a solid foundation for their marriage and their family life. The church provides family activities and family friends for them to rely on. In many ways, the church fills a role that no longer exists in many families -- that of the extended family. Dan Brown put it this way, "Our whole relationship is built around the church which provides a solid foundation. We share very strong and similar convictions in that area. Belonging to the same church makes a difference for our family." Dan told a story that the pastor who married him and Linda had told the congregation one Sunday.

> The pastor who married us came back to the church this summer and told us the parable of the seed. When the ground is rocky and shallow, it's like a marriage with little foundation. The seeds can't grow into healthy plants in the shallow soil. He related the rocky, shallow soil to a marriage. A lot of times when young people are getting married they talk about how much fun they're having, and it's about physical attraction. It's superficial stuff like the shallow soil. Compare that to a marriage that has real roots. It's more spiritual than that. There's a spiritual base to it and not just the superficial, romantic stuff.

In addition to providing a solid base with family

activities, friends, and support to these couples, a mutual spiritual faith for couples keeps them going in the same direction. Dana Kestner said, "Harry and I have found over the years that having a spiritual faith keeps us headed on the same path. When we start going off in separate directions, our faith pulls us back together and keeps us going in the same direction."

Children

Divorce entails two sets of tasks for the adults involved. The first is to rebuild their lives as adults so as to make good use of the second chances that divorce provides (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996). The second task is to parent the children after the divorce, protecting them from the crossfire between the ex-spouses and nurturing them as they grow up (p. 277).

> We have learned that good stepparent-child relationships are not assured. They need to be properly nurtured to take root in the minds and hearts of the children. Many children feel excluded from the re-married family. At the same time, we have seen some mothers and fathers, and even some stepparents, undertake heroic measures of loyalty, selflessness, and devotion to their children (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 302).

Although the research questions did not address the subject of children in the subsequent marriages, issues related to children emerged as a topic in the interviews. Nine of the 12 couples included children. Five couples

included children from one of the spouses in the family. Three of the couples blended children from both spouses. These couples had much to say about what it was like to parent, step-parent, and raise children in a family that included ex-spouses. Although there were some great stories about successes at being stepparents and blending families, some of the children experienced great difficulty, particularly at first, with the divorces and re-marriages. The children who were older when their parents divorced dealt with a lot of anger. Jim Grandfork described the effect on his son. "Robbie was 12 when his mother and I divorced. He was very angry. He was significantly impacted. He saw a psychologist for two and a half years or so." Jenna's oldest son, Colin, had some difficulties with anger and feeling rejected. She said, "I think that my oldest son, Colin, has had a whole lot of trouble with the rejection syndrome and has been pretty angry. My ex-husband never meant any harm to the boys. He fell in love with another woman and needed to leave. He never meant any harm, but it was real traumatic for them, especially for Colin."

For the women who were mothers of small children when they met their future subsequent husbands, the children were involved in the get-acquainted process from very early in the relationship. Rather than going on dates as a couple,

they did activities with the children. Linda Brown said, "The package deal was the thing from the very beginning." Dan added, "We were blending during dating. We did as much with the kids as we did without them." Linda told a story about Dan's involvement with the kids on the first Christmas morning after she and Dan started dating.

> The first Christmas morning in 1989 I had bought Zack a fire truck. After the 11 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service, Dan called and I told him I am trying to put this fire truck together, and it wouldn't work. So I had written Zack this note from Santa that said this fire truck was made by the elves wrong, and we would have to fix it later. Dan said that Santa does not bring broken toys...So Dan comes over at 12:30 a.m. and fixes it. At 3 a.m. I told him he could sleep on the sofa so he could experience Christmas morning with the boys after all that effort.

Being a fireman helped Ron Spicer be introduced to Jenna's boys. It turned out that Jenna's youngest son, who was then 5 years old, had already met Ron at school when he did a presentation about preventing fires. Jenna said that for weeks after that all he talked about was "my friend the fireman." When Ron came to the house for the first time, Jenna's son was thrilled to see it was his fireman friend. From then on, Ron was accepted by the boys. This had not been the case other times when she had dated, and the boys resented it. However, from the beginning, Ron spent concentrated time with the boys, and they enjoyed it.

Some of the families worked with counselors to receive

assistance with how to be effective stepparents. The Walters' raised Elizabeth's youngest son and Preston's youngest son. In addition, Preston had two older sons, and Elizabeth had an older son who did not live with them after they were married. The counselor suggested that the parent of the son needing discipline be the one to do it. The stepparent could let the other parent know what was going on. The counselor said the stepparent should treat the stepson like the neighbor's child when it was time to discipline.

> This psychologist told us that the best rule of thumb in being stepparents in a household is that you treat your stepchildren like the neighbors' kids. When the neighbor kids come over and they jump on the couch, you tell them "We don't do that in this house." Then the next time you see your neighbor you say, "hey I wanted to tell you that Tim was jumping on my couch the other day and I wanted you to know so that you can discipline your own child." We followed that advice and the biological parent took care of the disciplining of their own children. When we set up the rules and had to talk about situations, we sat down together with the boys so we came across as the united front. (Elizabeth Walters)

The approach to discipline and communication in a blended family outlined by Elizabeth Walters was found to be helpful in the families with stepparents and stepchildren in a 45-year longitudinal study completed by Heatherington and Kelly (2002). "The kind of disruptive behavior that can make a child a wedge issue in a marriage is minimized when

the biological parent continues to serve as the principal parent. The new stepparent focuses on providing support for discipline and establishing a friendship with the child" (p. 182). This aligns with how the Taylors handled things with Mary Beth's daughter, Anna. Frank Taylor said, "I don't make major decisions about Mary Beth's daughter, Anna." Mary Beth said, "I do have more final decisions on Anna but Frank is with her a lot because he does all the tennis stuff. He plays tennis and Anna plays tennis. He also takes her shopping and buys all her clothes because I hate to shop."

The couples with children established rituals and rules to help their family work better together.

> Part of what makes a family feel like a family is a shared history and shared family routines, celebrations, and traditions. These are things new stepfamilies lack at the outset but can create, and they help to promote a sense of identity and cohesion. The regular routines of family life such as eating together at six, reading before bed, going to church or for Sunday drives in the country help to build a sense of rootedness in a step family. They help to make step family life feel more organized, predictable and reliable (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002, p. 199).

Some of the rules the families in the study created related to the children's visits with their parents who were ex-spouses of the parents with whom they were living and others related to how the ex-spouses were treated for the

kids' sake. For example, Ron and Jenna Spicer decided not to criticize the boys' biological father or his wife in front of the boys. They also decided that it was important that their dad see them on a regular basis which had not been the case in the past.

> One of the rules we had between was that we'd never say anything in front of the kids about the ex-spouses. The other was that their dad see them at least once a month. I called him and suggested to him that would be good for him to see the kids once a month. It would be good for the kids and I also knew it would be good for us to have one weekend a month by ourselves. (Ron Spicer)

> The boys' dad only saw them for a few days at Christmas and then in the summertime for one week. Other than that he didn't phone them; he didn't write them. But, Ron called him and said, "You need to see those kids." Ron thought to do it. I don't know why I never thought to do it. The boys enjoyed seeing their father once a month. (Jenna Spicer)

The Walters made a rule that they would make their plans for holidays and other occasions and anyone who wanted to join in was welcome. However, they did not juggle their plans around, trying to accommodate everyone. In addition to simplifying holiday planning, this approach served to communicate to family members that the Walters were important as a couple.

> It got real complicated with five children and their goings on, so we decided we would make a plan for what we wanted to do at holiday time and so on. We were first as a couple. We would make our plan, and we'd invite anybody to join us that wanted to. This would be what we would do. That

went for holidays, birthdays, etc. So this went for the other parents. The kids could accept their invitation, or not, or our invitation, but when we started planning something, we decided the planning begins with us -- he and I. And that continues. (Elizabeth Walters)

Talia Wentz said that they made a rule that no ex-spouses could come to their house. It was important for her to establish boundaries when she and Victor were beginning their home and needing stability as a couple and for their family.

> Stability for our marriage was really important. When we first got married, I didn't allow any ex-spouses at our house. If we were going to make a child exchange, it was done somewhere else. We tried to keep all negative outside forces out of our house. Just having the kids was enough difficulty. It was symbolic for me. It was a boundary. My house was off limits. Now today either one of them could come, but during those first years, it was important because we were establishing our home. (Talia Wentz)

The Spicers established a tradition of making family mealtime a priority. Everyone sat down together both at breakfast and dinner. The children could include their friends if they wanted, and the television had to be turned off so that conversation could take place.

> One thing we did right with the kids -- we all sat down every breakfast and every dinner that they were home. They would bring their friends. Whoever was in the house at mealtime would sit down and eat with us. We like a big table and like filling it up. The television had to be turned off so we could talk. (Jenna Spicer)

Several of the spouses were very complimentary about

their partners' parenting or stepparenting skills. In one case the stepparent was more patient with the kids than the biological parent.

> We didn't have a lot of insights or parenting skills that we had learned from anyone. Ron's dad died when he was 9 so he didn't have a role model for that. That's one thing that kind of astonishes me about his parenting skills. It was one of those serendipitous, God-given talents that he has developed. He is very reasonable and he rarely ever lost his temper. The kids related to that very well because I can be totally unreasonable and tend to lose my temper often so they saw him as a safe harbor. They would flee from me and go to him. He provided that calming influence that they needed. (Jenna Spicer)

Eleanor Green felt that her husband, Lance, was very patient with her pre-teen daughters. She knew it was not easy for him to move in to her house where her daughters had grown up and adapt to a previously all-female household. Sometimes, it seemed like the girls were very critical of him, but Eleanor said that he handled it very well and was very patient with her daughters.

Victor Wentz said his wife, Talia, spent hours working with his son to help him catch up in school. While it was difficult for them at the time, Victor's son is now in college and is very close to Talia whom he calls "Mom".

> My son was doing poorly in school so for second grade he came to live with us. It was a tough time. He was very far behind academically. Talia worked hard with him. Now that he is in college they have the closest relationship. He calls and asks for Mom and talks to her about girls he's

> dating and what's going on at college. It's quite a compliment to Talia. (Victor Wentz)

Talia described some of the challenges that she faced as she worked with Christopher. He had suffered in his development because his biological mother did not parent him, so Victor were able to have Christopher move in with them.

> Christopher and I had some hard times during those early years because we live in one of the toughest school districts and it has very high standards. They wanted to put him through the first grade again, and he had already been held up once. He didn't know his birth date, how to write his name, the days of the week, how to tell time, what a dozen was -- common, basic stuff. He did not have good table manners and no people skills. One time we were at the neighbor's house and a dollar was on the floor. He picked it up and put it in his pocket. His mother didn't do the things she should have done, and my kids' father didn't do what he should have done with our kids. They would have made a perfect match -- Victor's wife and my husband. (Talia Wentz)

These stepparents took their roles very seriously. This was particularly so when they parented children who were infants and toddlers when the subsequent marriage occurred. They became parents to their partners' children. As a result, they took responsibility as parents and looked upon these children as their own. As Dan Brown said, "My final realization was that I would be a father to these two boys who needed a father. I could be a good father to them. As good a father as if I had a biological child. I am very

much their father"

The Walters said that they really did blend their family of five boys - three of whom were Preston's and two of whom were Elizabeth's. Sometimes people just think they have five kids, and it feels like there never was a divorce. Elizabeth stated, "Most of the time people who haven't known us before think that we have five kids. It's like there never was a divorce, and it's always been this way."

In addition to making a success of their subsequent marriages, these couples also made a success of raising their children in blended families. They did not necessarily have training or parenting skills that they had learned from their own parents. They worked with counselors to get advice on how to adapt to their new roles as stepparents and parents in the newly-formed families. They spent time thinking about how they wanted their stepfamily system to work.

This is not to say that there were no problems with raising the children in the blended families. The kids definitely had some difficulties related to their parents' divorces. However, they were able to overcome them with counseling, a conscious plan of action, and with time. In addition, the families were able to form their own rituals and set rules that worked for them. The stepparents took

their roles with their spouses' children very seriously and in many cases they filled very important roles with these children. Together, they were able to build successful families.

CHAPTER 6

MAKING THE HOUSE A HOME

Zestful Companionship

Once the house is completed, it is really just a building. It needs the couple or the family to make it a home. The family makes it a home by establishing traditions, having fun together, enjoying each other's company, and just generally, as Jim Grandfork calls it, "making memories". These are the things the couples in the study described as making their marriages worthwhile and successful. Collectively, these form zestful companionship. Zestful companionship is a phrase that describes the couples who are enjoying their successful, subsequent marriages.

Zest is a word that has been utilized in previous studies about teaching and learning. Conti and Fellenz (1988) asked students to identify characteristics of quality teachers. One of the characteristics they identified was "a zest for life not limited to the classroom" (p. 97). The students said that these teachers with a zest for life "know when to be serious but are real loose.....They have a good attitude toward life and are always laughing....Outside of

class they talk to students on the street and share with students things from their background" (p. 97).

The participants in a study about the learning of older adults in the Academy of Senior Professionals in Bethany, Oklahoma were described as zestful-agers (Lively, 2001, p. 328). The study found that lifelong learning results in zestful aging. Zestful aging is described as "aging that is done with a keen relish and enjoyment of life" (p. 328). The description of zestful-agers continues:

> Through an active curiosity about life and deliberately seeking out new learning experiences, older adult learners can continue to enjoy life with a richness of purpose and productivity. Hence, they become zestful-agers. Zestful-agers have a critical awareness of their stage of life; indeed, zestful aging does not mean that zestful-agers do not face emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges and crises. However, zestful-agers find ways to address these problems. Zestful aging results in a courage and realistic optimism about the potential to keep on learning and to keep on growing. Zestful-agers are deeply committed to staying current and to looking forward. Zestful-agers are not intimidated by their stage of life; rather, they embrace life with a vitality and an eagerness (pp. 328-329).

The descriptions of the teachers with a zest for life and the zestful-agers are similar to the description by the couples in the successful, subsequent marriages of their lives together including the activities they participate in and the attitudes they exhibit toward each other and toward life. They enjoy being together. They have fun. They like

to learn new things together. They do projects together. They talk about connecting, companionship, and fun. In addition, they love each other unconditionally and with total acceptance. They share both the power and the responsibilities in their marriages. They treat each other with great caring and kindness. As one of them said, "Otherwise, what would be the point?"

A Positive Spiral

Pearson (1994) found in her study of happily married couples that happy couples are likely to engage in positive behaviors with each other. These positive behaviors include a voice filled with caring, warmth, tenderness, empathy, cheerfulness, affection, buoyancy, concern, and laughter. Satisfied spouses are more likely to positively reinforce each other. They are more likely to exchange smiles, hugs, and compliments. They offer both unconditional and conditional positive behaviors. The unconditional ones are for being and include smiling, hugging, and saying "I love you" or "You look terrific." Conditional ones are for doing and include such things as "Thanks for the backrub," "Your dinner was delicious, " "I appreciate your picking up my shirts," and "You did a good job of cleaning the garage" (p. 79).

From such actions, a spiraling positive effect emerges.

The satisfied couples use more frequent positive and effective interaction which leads to greater satisfaction (Pearson, 1994, p. 79). Couples who thrive focus on what they love about each other and their relationship, and they pay less attention to what they do not like (Page, 1997, p. 29). Happily married couples know how nourishing it is to give freely and generously, wanting nothing in return. Couples in happy marriages take great joy in giving to each other. This can vary from doing little favors for their partner, to offering help, to giving in when preferences differ, or to thinking up lovely surprises (Page, 1997, p. 41).

The couples in the study of successful, subsequent marriages talked about how they treat each other and what they have learned about how married partners should treat each other. They learned that it is important to treat the person they are married to with great kindness and with the best behaviors. In their first marriages, this did not occur. However, in their subsequent marriages, they had learned how important it is to exchange positive behaviors. Harry Kestner said, "One of the things I learned was that you treat the person in your marriage and in your family the very best. They are the people we should have been treating the best." Anita Grandfork stated, "One of the most

important things that I learned is that your family members are the people you should be kindest to and save your best behavior for. You bring out the best in each other and not the worst in each other. That's part of a true marriage, partnership, a union."

The Carter's told a story about looking out for each other or, as John put it, "watching for and recognizing what the partner needed." When Carol was working on her dissertation, her son, Seth, called and said he wanted to come home from the university for a visit. John suggested that he not come because his mother was writing and his proposed visit could interrupt her flow of work. Seth decided not to visit at that time. Carol said:

> If it hadn't have been for John, I wouldn't have worked on the doctorate at all. I had been the one who was burned by academia, but he kept saying just try one class. So I took one class and then he said you should take another. He was always encouraging and was really supportive of each step. He did things like cooking most of the meals so that when I was doing the dissertation I could feed my dad and get right to work or he would take care of my dad. He was just really helpful and helped me to make it.

The partners noticed that when they treated their spouse the very best, it became a positive spiral. One good deed led to another and another. The positive spiral was shared between the two spouses and almost took on a life of its own. Harry Kestner said, "When you feel like you're

being treated well you want to treat the other person well, and it builds and builds into a positive thing." John Carter stated, "The thing that makes this work the best is that we both really care about the other person's desires. I'll come home, and Carol will have an article on the table about a school or a program that she thinks I'll be interested in. It's just a constant. I try to do the same for her, and it kind of grows. It goes back and forth and it's shared."

Admiration

The couples expressed admiration for each other during the interviews. They did not say "I admire my partner." But they would compliment each other off and on during the interviews. For example, Dana Kestner was talking about her job as a bookkeeper at a local church. "That's how I learned my accounting skills - on the job. I had a natural ability in the bookkeeping field and every job I got was better. I always rose to the top." Her husband, Harry said, "She has a very analytical mind."

The Whites were talking about how they have each adopted non-traditional stereotypical communication styles. Rob can use a more feminine style of communication and Sharon uses a more masculine style because of the nature of her work. "Susan works in a male dominated profession. She

couldn't survive in that profession if she didn't have the male type communication style. And look at how she's doing -- she's flourishing."

The Pettigrew's were talking about how their marriage is a partnership. They were discussing how they handled money and each had accounts in their own name. Keith explained, "Carol has always been incredibly understanding and unselfish. The court ordered me to pay alimony to my ex-wife for several years. When the time ran out, Carol insisted that I go ahead and voluntarily continue to send the money for a couple of years." Carol said, "I've been there." Keith added, "She is generous about nearly everything." "You are too, Keith," was Carol's response.

Couples who build a system of friendship, fondness, and admiration for each other and who infuse their marital interactions, especially the conflicts, with positive affect are the most successful in building a "sound house of marriage" (Carrere & Gottman, 1998). Marital success comes through finding conflict resolution patterns of persuasion and influence that are similar in nature to those of one's partner. Marriages are more likely to remain intact when men can accept influence from their wives by deescalating the negativity of the interaction and when women can soften the startup of the conflict. These are the ingredients for

making a marriage happy and for making the marriage last (p. 20).

Learning Together

The couples participate in many activities together and quite often these are activities that involve learning. The couples are very oriented to learning, and it can be both formal and informal, or self-directed learning. When they talk about the differences between their first and their subsequent marriages, they mention that they "learned this" or they "learned that." Several of the individuals in the couples have been working on advanced degrees with the support of their spouses.

Learning was a key subject discussed by the couples during their interviews. The interviews began with the couples taking the ATLAS (Assessing The Strategies of AdultS) instrument which helps individuals determine their learning strategy. Learning strategies include the initial techniques or skills a person adopts when beginning a learning activity. Typically, this would be an informal learning project that is self-directed as opposed to a formal learning project like pursuing a college degree. ATLAS helps learners determine which of three learning strategies they typically adopt: Problem Solver, Engager, or Navigator; there are two subgroups within each learning

strategy preference group.

Problem Solvers

When beginning a learning activity, Problem Solvers rely heavily on all the strategies in the area of critical thinking (Conti & Kolody, 1999). They like to identify the best possible resources such as manuals, books, and modern information sources or experts for the learning project. They like to test assumptions, generate alternatives, practice conditional acceptance, and they adjust their learning process as needed. They also tend to utilize many external aids (p. 12). Problem Solvers like to create alternatives (Lively, 2000). They do not like only one answer or to be categorized or stereotyped. They are curious and inventive, but because they like to have many options, they tend to have difficulty in making decisions. Consequently, they do better in problem-solving kinds of activities (p. 221). Problem Solvers rely heavily on trial-and-error because it is a way of generating and testing alternatives. One subgroup of Problem Solvers likes to focus on the end result and then devise a plan with schedules and deadlines to accomplish the learning project (Conti & Kolody, 1999). Thinking of a variety of ways of learning the material is a characteristic the other subgroup (p. 14).

Carol and Keith Pettigrew, both Problem Solvers, like to spend time learning together by taking classes, participating in book clubs, and taking trips with Elderhostel, a continuing education program for senior adults who like to keep learning.

> We like to spend time learning together. We take classes together in writing. We read books together and discuss them. We belong to a book club. We have always valued learning. We went on an Elderhostel trip a couple of years ago to learn about the Revolutionary War. We attend lectures frequently. Our learning together keeps our marriage strong. Our learning activities aren't necessarily about how to have a good marriage but it gives us lots to talk about. (Keith Pettigrew)

Mary Beth and Frank Taylor mentioned how much they enjoy going to the opera or ballet and reading about them prior to attending these events. Frank said, "We are big cultural buffs. We like going to the opera and reading up on it first. We like going to the ballet." In addition, they take long trips and spend a great deal of time reading and planning for the trips ahead of time. Frank assumes responsibility for the majority of the researching tasks, and Mary Beth makes their room reservations, usually at bed and breakfasts in peoples' homes.

> The neatest thing we do together is the trips that we take. Last summer we rented our home to people who wanted to go to the golf tournament, and we took a month long trip to England. Frank is the main researcher. He will get books on places that we're going to visit. We divide up the transportation planning, and I do the rooms. He

> got our tickets to Swan Lake and a lot of the events we're going to be doing for this upcoming trip to New York. Frank starts earlier and reads more. When we were in London we went to three ballets and an opera and Frank went to the tennis finals. Then we took an incredible car trip through Jane Austen country. We got to see where she lived and where she ended up finishing up most of her novels. We had read her works ahead of time, and I teach Jane Austen. Our trips are usually well planned because we know we probably can't to go there again so we had better experience it as much as possible. (Mary Beth Taylor)

As a problem solver Frank Taylor is concerned with getting the best resources. He gathers up all the books on the subject and reads them and then lets Mary Beth know which books are the best ones. Mary Beth is an Engager. Frank noted that Mary Beth likes to use a group approach when she teaches. She uses open-ended questions and practical questioning to get a discussion going. Mary Beth said that it was Frank's idea that she utilize a practical, hands-on approach for the book that she wrote. After completing ATLAS, Frank was more sure that Mary Beth was an Engager than he was about himself being a Problem Solver. He said, "Mary Beth learns a little something and next thing you know she's talking about it." Mary Beth noticed that Frank had to read all the choices of learning strategies to see if those alternatives fit him before he settled on Problem Solver.

Learning to play musical instruments has led to Eleanor

and Lance Green playing in a band that performs at area nursing homes. Eleanor plays a chord piano and sings harmony. Lance plays guitar and sings lead. Eleanor said she just got the chord piano and is learning to play by trial-and-error. Not coincidentally, Eleanor is a Problem Solver. Eleanor said she also used some trial-and-error in choosing a partner. After her first marriage ended, she married someone whom she thought was just the opposite of her first husband. After that marriage ended in divorce, she met Lance. She attributed her trial-and-error approach to being a Problem Solver once she was aware that was her learning strategy.

Both Cathy and John Keilor are Problem Solvers and also talked about utilizing the Problem Solver trial-and-error method in their lives. Both Cathy and John were married twice before they married each other.

> I think I've learned those things about myself by trial-and-error. We're both Problem Solvers. That's how I basically spent my whole life, quite frankly, trying all kinds of alternatives, trial-and-error, and deciding that this is something that I don't want after I do it. Rather than having a plan and saying this is what I want. In fact, I just shocked one of my staff members when we were talking about career planning. I've spent my professional life trying all kinds of things, and I would do it for awhile and then decide that's something I don't want to do. I don't like it. It's not getting me to my picture of what I'd like to be in general. I have felt all my life that there's something wrong with that because mainstream America is focused on a much more

> linear approach, and so to have this kind of trial-and-error approach to the world is viewed as somewhat odd. What is your problem? Two marriages, what's wrong with you? What's wrong with you that you can't keep a job? I've been in my current job 13 years now so it's not that I can't do it, but there has to be an element. (Cathy Keilor)

The Keilor's also exhibit characteristics of Problem Solvers by what they describe as their weakness for books. They said if they have a problem it is the piles of books accumulating in their home. John Keilor said, "We use every source that we can think of for information for problem solving and projects on the ranch."

The Browns are also both Problem Solvers. They have each been working on master's degrees so are involved in formal learning projects. Linda Brown felt like she was a Problem Solver. "I feel like I am definitely a Problem Solver Group 2. I do like to generate alternatives, use tons of resources, and I love to do research."

Engagers

An Engager must have an internal sense of the importance of the learning to them personally before getting involved in the learning. Once confident of the value of the learning, an Engager likes to maintain a focus on the material to be learned. They are "passionate learners who love to learn, learn with feeling, and learn best when they are activity engaged in a meaningful manner with the

learning task" (Conti & Kolody, 1999, p. 13). Engagers prefer learning activities where they can interact and collaborate with others. They tend to work out of the affective domain. They commit to the learning experience if they perceive the learning to have value to themselves. "If the learning activity is not perceived or expected to be worthwhile or an enjoyable experience, the Engager will seek out another activity that they will find more meaningful" (p. 14). If the learning experience is perceived to be superficial or too tedious with a lot of detail, the Engager will often pursue other learning activities that will result in self-development (Lively, 2000). Furthermore, Engagers pursue learning that will keep them interested until the task is completed. Because of this, Engagers contemplate before engaging in the learning project because when they do, they tend to fully immerse themselves in the project. The learning task will be very difficult for the Engager to complete if the Engager enters the learning half-heartedly (pp. 216-17).

While three of the couples included both of the individuals being Problem Solvers, two of the twelve couples were composed of two Engagers. The Engagers had much to say about how they felt about learning. The Engagers tended to consult with therapists and other experts when going through

the divorce process. Both Elizabeth and Preston Walters felt like the Engager description fit them. Preston said, "I have to feel passion for what I'm going to learn, and then I go for it. Elizabeth likes to involve other people, too. We went to the psychologist, the therapist, and the priest, and we learned from them." Ron Spicer said the same thing about his wife, Jenna, who is an Engager. "She likes to pick peoples' brains so the Engager learning strategy fits her." Anita Grandfork talked about the learning that took place during the time of her divorce and how important it was for her to be able to discuss what she was reading with someone else to make the learning meaningful.

> During that time I was in hyper-learning mode, as I see it now. I learned from everything possible including friends and family. Reading books didn't really have meaning to me unless I talked it over with someone else. Talking it over with someone is when the meaning would come alive. I was learning at the speed of light -- soaking it up. (Anita Grandfork)

Navigators

Navigators are the group of learners who are:

> Focused learners who make a plan for learning and follow the plan They are goal-oriented, high achievers who like to plan and organize activities and rely heavily on the learning strategies of planning, attention, identification and careful use of resources. They typically test assumptions and make logical connections (Conti & Kolody, 1999, p. 9).

Navigators in one subgroup like to use human resources

while learners in the other subgroup are more concerned with the organization of the material into meaningful patterns. Planning is important to Navigators so schedules are crucial to them (Conti & Kolody, 1999, as cited in Lively, 2003). They like to see "the big picture" so they know what to expect. Deadlines and what the final results should look like help in planning the learning project. Efficiency and using time wisely is important. They prefer a structured living environment where everything has its place. Consequently, they prefer a neat and organized space for their learning projects. They purposefully will create a learning environment that is designed specifically for that purpose. Keeping a time schedule for learning is also helpful. They are most comfortable with learning that requires "facts." Opinions of other people do not have that much credibility with them unless the people are perceived to be experts in the field. Therefore, Navigators use many resources such as the library and human resources (p. 212).

There were only three Navigators in the entire group of twelve couples who were interviewed. Talia Wentz is a Navigator, and she described the organizational skills she uses as she completes her doctoral degree. She focuses on schedules and strict deadlines and is uncomfortable with lack of structure in her learning activities so she felt she

fit the Navigator learning strategy very well. Ron Spicer is also a Navigator, and as an adjunct instructor provides clear objectives and expectations and prompt feedback to his students because those are the characteristics he appreciates when he participates in a learning activity. Ron is writing his fourth book. It is a technical manual for firefighters at the management and executive level. He described his organized approach to writing his latest book:

> Just thinking about the description of the Navigator learning strategy and what I'm doing with writing the technical manual, the description fits with the way I'm going about it. I've laid it out in a fairly linear format. It starts with the basic skills for a manager or higher level leader of an organization with communication, management, ethics, and logic, and then we apply it to each of the function areas. The book materials are all organized into binders. I have a binder that has my committee comments, a binder that has my references, and a binder that has all the material I've developed. It's all organized that way. Most of the manuals we've done in our department didn't have summaries at the end of each chapter, but all four of mine do. I have a drawer full of markers all organized by color. The materials for each class I teach are each in a different binder. (Ron Spicer)

Ron felt like he moves between the subgroup who utilizes other people who know about the topic in his learning activities and the subgroup where the information is structured by the learner so that the learning activity can be successfully completed depending on what kind of learning activity he is engaged in.

Mixed Learning Strategy Couples

Five of the couples interviewed shared the same learning strategy. However, seven couples had two different learning strategies. For example, Victor Wentz is a Problem Solver and Talia is a Navigator. Vincent said he likes to think about all aspects of a problem and carefully consider things. He stated, "I like to examine things from all sides before I get into something. It's hard to make a decision about something. I want to take advantage of the knowledge of others so I don't have to experience the problems they have gone through. I like to look at every angle of a problem."

At first Harry Kestner was not sure he was an Engager but then he remembered how he organized the photography collective forum so that people could discuss their latest photography projects and ideas. He learned his photography skills through self-directed learning projects and by using well known photographers like Ansel Adams as role models. Dana Kestner felt that the Problem Solver learning strategy felt her very well. She said, "I like my bookkeeping clients to lay out what that they want done and then I like to think about all the alternative ways to meet their needs."

Sharon White is an Engager, and Rob is a Problem

Solver. Rob said, "I think if we were both Problem Solvers, it would be good because then Sharon would understand my Problem Solver ways." Five of the twelve couples share the same learning strategy while seven of the twelve couples have two different learning strategies within the same couple.

Compatibility and Fun

The couples mention being compatible and having fun together when they talk about their marriages. They describe themselves as having a lot in common and liking to do the same things. Eleanor Green said, "By March we were talking about getting married; I said I think we may as well get married we get along so well. We had known each other six months and we've been married 22 years." Harry Kestner stated, "It wasn't just that we liked all the same things, but it was that Dana was a lot of fun to be with and still is."

Talia Wentz said, "We have so much in common. We've shot photography together at weddings and other events." Carol Pettigrew said, "We had my social work and his rehabilitation work in common."

> We've always done house projects together. That's characterized us. You have to make decisions about it together. We went to Dallas and figured out what we wanted to get. Now we're going to do the landscaping together, and we're starting on it during spring break. (Karen Hice)

> We do things together. We don't take separate vacations. We are supportive of each other's occupations. We talk about what we do during the day and if she needs my opinion or just wants to hear what I have to say, she asks me. We started that out early. I loved hearing about her interior design work, and I even painted for her. (Ron Spicer)

> It's the fact that we do things together. He's always taken an interest in what I do and vice versa. We don't have cable TV so we have to talk a lot. We discovered when the kids left, we needed something, so we took up dancing. We dance at the Elks Club, the VFW, and the studio where we take lessons, attend workshops in other states and compete. It's a date night for us once week. We get dressed up and go out. It wouldn't matter what it was. It could be mountain climbing together. (Jenna Spicer)

> Dinner is a social time. We cook together, eat together, clean up together. (Ron Spicer)

When the couples do projects together, they often find that their talents complement each other. One of them is good at one part of the project and the other is good at another part.

> Cathy worked at the historical society, and I had a printing company. We did exhibits together for about 6 or 7 years, about three times a year. We did research and discovered who was good at what. Cathy could write and do layout, and I could do two dimensional work. We'd talk about the concept together. In other words, our talents complemented each other. (John Keilor)

Total Acceptance

Happily married spouses exhibit respect, empathy, and unconditional acceptance for each other (Pearson, 1994).

Their love for each other is demonstrated in understanding and supportive behaviors. Loving couples accept each other as they are. The language used to discuss this positive regard is referred to variously as respect, consideration, and unconditional love. Not only do they accept each other, but they often also come to appreciate the other person's idiosyncrasies. Unconditional love moves a person to a higher level. It is love without qualification. It does not allow the conditional "if you do this, then I will love you" (p. 54). According to Pearson (1994), who studied over 50 couples who have been in long and happy marriages, satisfied couples in long marriages express the importance of this form of acceptance. They communicate unconditional love in a variety of ways. Understanding may result in a sense of peacefulness in the marriage (p. 54).

One of the husbands in Pearson's study (1994) described what this type of understanding does in his long, successful marriage. "What's important is if you feel comfortable with the other person when you're with them, you get a feeling of relaxation. There's no tension. A good marriage has to be relaxed. Relaxation and a lack of tension are important. The more relaxed two people are, the better chance they have for success," (p. 57).

Unconditional love is simply total acceptance. It

means not putting any restrictions on the love a person has for the partner (Page, 1997). However, when two people are accepting of each other, it does not mean that they cannot ever ask for change. A spirit of acceptance in a relationship creates a nonjudgmental, safe atmosphere that makes asking for change much easier (pp. 33- 37).

The couples interviewed in this study said they feel totally accepted by each other and know that they are loved by their partner. This is different from their previous marriages in which they did not have a feeling of being accepted for who they were and there was not a deep feeling of knowing that they were loved.

> I feel like I am more just like my own person in this marriage....There wasn't the trust or the commitment in my first marriage. I never felt that secure. (Elizabeth Walters)

> In our marriage we accept each other as we are and we are, not thinking we are going to change each other. Being willing to forgive and not get annoyed by it all is important. (Preston Walters)

Dana Kestner described feeling very judged in her first marriage and "never good enough." Now she says, "I am pretty much who I am now. I don't have levels or depths. I am what you see. What you see is what I am. Harry accepts me for who I am. I don't feel like I'm not good enough."

Being comfortable with yourself and being more evolved as a person helps a person to feel totally accepted by their

spouse. Mary Beth Taylor stated, "It's recognizing the passion that the other person has and fitting your life into that passion, and Frank allows me to live that passion."

Trust is a word that the couples used often when discussing their feeling of being totally accepted by their partners in their subsequent marriages. This type of trust leads to a deep-down feeling of knowing that the partner in the marriage is loved and cared for by one's spouse. Instead of a feeling of instability and unsureness which the couples described experiencing in their previous marriages, they described an unshakable confidence in their being loved by their partners in their subsequent marriages.

> The biggest difference between my first marriage and my marriage with Preston is that I know for sure and for certain every morning when I pull out of my driveway that I am loved and cared for. I didn't know that being totally loved was something that you felt. I've learned trust. What trust means. I didn't have that but didn't know I didn't have it for 14 years. Not that he wasn't a good man and a good provider. But there were things missing that are real valuable. Everyday things. I know for certain ever single solitary day that I am loved and cared about. Our household, our well being, will never ever be in jeopardy. Not for a minute. That's pretty incredible. (Elizabeth Walters)

Partnership

Through communication a couple creates a shared reality and negotiates a power relationship of their own (Pearson, 1994). The power relationship may be very different in the

second or third marriage than it was in the first marriage or in the marriages of the marital partners' parents. Researchers have shown that egalitarianism which is generally valued in our culture but which is not always practiced by married couples, is the pattern of choice for many marital partners. Marriages in which power is shared or split are most highly related to marital satisfaction (p. 21).

Susan Page (1997) writes about essential traits of couples who thrive. The couples she interviewed in "thriving marriages" had little conflict over household chores. They exhibited a "spirit of fair play that led them to divide up tasks in a way that both found equitable. Husbands shared or took total responsibility for shopping, cooking, cleaning and paying bills. Some of the wives did yard work, household repairs and car maintenance. Mostly the chores divided along more traditional lines, but no one felt unduly burdened. These thriving couples also negotiated large purchases and shared decisions about money" (pp. 89-91). Likewise, the couples who were interviewed described how power and responsibility are shared in their current marriages. For most, this was different from what occurred in their earlier marriages. Five of the couples described how they had experienced earlier marriages in

which one person had all the power. For example:

> With my first husband, I was argumentative and felt defensive. If I wanted to do anything different, I couldn't tell him. I have not been like that with any other relationship in my life. I felt disrespected as a female and as a person. It was like, you can't do this unless I tell you can. (Anita Grandfork)

In their previous marriages, there were also couples in which one partner wanted the other to be more like a parent than a partner. In other words, the person wanted to be taken care of by their spouse. This was particularly so in regards to money issues.

> I'd been in the military and was used to being on my own. My first wife was a country girl. I taught her to drive and how to write checks and things of this nature. She kind of resisted the business side of things, and I think she wanted me to be her father and take care of her like a parent. (Keith Pettigrew)

How couples handled money in their early marriages and in their current marriages revealed a great deal about the power in the marriages. Controlling the money in the marriage was a way that one person in the marriage maintained control. Commenting about her first husband and power, Eleanor Green said, "I was married to a man who controlled all the money so I substitute taught so I could to have some money," was Eleanor Green's comment about her first husband and power. Mary Beth Taylor stated, "When I was married to my first husband he took care of the money

and made all the decisions regarding the finances." It wasn't just the women who had no control when it came to financial issues in the first marriages. Husbands also experienced having their spouse control all the money in their first marriages. John Keilor said, "In my first marriage, I had no access to the checkbook. I earned the money and supported the family but had no access to checks."

The couples in the self-identified, successful subsequent marriages report that they are sharing the power in their marriages. Money decisions are shared as are bill-paying responsibilities. Keith Pettigrew explained, "When Carol and I got married, we benefited from having made certain mistakes in our previous marriages. One of the things we did right off the bat was have separate checking accounts. Carol pays certain bills, and I pay certain bills. Earlier it was my responsibility with my first wife. Carol and I are more like partners."

Sharing the decisions regarding money can be worked out by having both separate and joint checking accounts. The individuals in the couple can pay their own individual bills with their personal checking accounts and shared household expenses with a joint account to which they both contribute.

> I have my own checkbook, and John has his checkbook. Then we have a joint checkbook. I manage the joint account, and that's where we pay the joint household bills. In our marriage, it

> sort of evolves and depends on who feels comfortable doing it. I do the joint checkbook because it's something that John isn't comfortable with. (Cathy Keilor)

In subsequent marriages, both individuals bring their own expenses into the marriages. It makes sense to the couples for the individual expenses to be retained by the individuals rather than being shared by the couple.

> I had my own house, and Frank had his two properties so we have two separate checkbooks. I pay all the bills, and they are divided in half. I really like the separate finances. My first husband did it all the first time. Since each person brought things to the marriage that are their own, it makes sense to have separate checking accounts. (Mary Beth Taylor)

In these subsequent marriages, responsibility is also divided according to what makes sense. One person may have special qualifications and therefore it is logical for that person to take on certain jobs. Sharon said, "Since Rob is a CPA, he balances my checkbook, writes the checks, pays the bills, etc. He handles the money. It works pretty well. We have this unwritten rule that if it's more than $200 we at least consult with each other. It's not that we ask permission, but we discuss it." Eleanor Green commented, "I pay the bills. We talk over large expenditures if we're going to spend more than $100. We've never really had any money problems with each other at all."

Household duties fall into the concept of dividing up

the chores according to what makes sense or who feels comfortable with what job. The division of labor in these marriages is not done according to stereotypical gender categories. The Keilor's described how they organized the household chores and how they have a pretty practical approach that does not include much planning or struggle and is not based on traditional gender roles.

> We try to share household duties. We're neither neat freaks or real slobs so that helps. If I know she is getting home late I will try to prepare something for dinner or whatever. As far as the dishes and general housework - whoever is there does it. It's to a large extent unspoken. There's no contract or struggling. No one has it mapped out. (John Keilor)

Eleanor Green said, "As far as doing things Leon loves to cook and I hate to cook so he takes over a lot of those duties."

Another version of arranging the responsibilities depending on what makes sense relates to health and aging issues. Sometimes one of the partners in the marriage experiences a health problem that causes the responsibilities to be changed around. For Carol Pettigrew, "Keith is doing the cooking now and helps me get around as I have neuropathy in my legs."

Jenna and Ron Spicer described how they approached their marriage from the point of view of two people who have equal status. Therefore, they are not marrying out of

economic necessity as in earlier times. They are looking for a sharing of responsibilities and power and a relationship based on connectedness.

> By the time we married, I had two degrees in communication, and we came together as two equals. We both respected each other and negotiated things out. Ron told me at one point when we were engaged, "It worries because you don't need me." I replied, "You're right. I don't need you. I have my own home and a good job. I do want you though. That's what made the difference. We didn't marry because we were desperate for someone. I didn't need a spouse to complete me or pay the bills. He didn't need that either. He was very intelligent and capable. When you get together on that basis, a lot of negotiations are needed. There used to be an economic need for people to stay married. Now couples need to find the connectedness because they don't need the economics. (Jenna Spicer)

Connecting and Re-connecting

Finally, a key component to zestful companionship is connecting. The couples talk about connecting and re-connecting. They are always connecting whether it is through doing projects, spending time together, doing something fun, or looking out for the other person. The projects and the learning activities that the couples participate in are not necessarily about how to have a good marriage. What they contribute to the successful marriages is providing the couples with many interesting things to talk about, many things to keep them active and interested and growing. As they grow and learn from their projects and learning activities, their marriage continues to grow and be

successful.

> We don't always hold hands either, but there is a common drive to build something. We both have the same vision of ultimately what that should be. What is interesting about it is while we do have the common thing of the ranch, there's also what he does with the jewelry and what I do with fiber-arts or with learning or writing. It all kind of fits in this big whole pot, and it enriches the common goal for the sustainable. It's like we keep learning what would appear to be peripheral, superficial things. In doing that, those things fulfill us, and then it satisfies both of us. It's holistic. Not that we're overtly saying that we want you to learn about each other's psychological or emotional needs. We are letting that take care of itself. When we're doing other things right, those things all fall into place. It's about connections - connecting and problem solving. When we're doing other things right, everything falls into place. (Cathy Keilor)

CHAPTER 7

THE HOUSEWARMING

Summary of the Study

Marriages ended in divorce in ever increasing numbers during the last half of the twentieth century. While the number of divorces seems to have stabilized since the 1990s, a typical statistic associated with marriage and divorce is that 50% of all marriages end in divorce (Kelley & Burg, 2000). Furthermore, 75% of those who have married and divorced once marry again (Kelley & Burg, 2000). In fact, 40% of all marriages are a remarriage for one of the adults involved (Kelley & Burg, 2000). The divorce rate is higher for second marriages than for first marriages (Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985, p. 277). Second and third marriages end in divorce 60% of the time (Marano, 2000).

Real-life problems such as divorce and re-marriage provide adults with opportunities for learning. A number of educators have proposed that engaging in learning activities is one way in which adults cope with life events and transitions (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Knox, 1977; Merriam & Clark, 1991; Merriam & Yang, 1996; Schlossberg, Waters &

Goodman, 1995; Tennant & Pogson, 1995; Wolf & Leahy, 1998). Most adults learn in order to cope with some change in their lives, and this learning is tied to a triggering event (Aslanian & Bricknell, 1980). These triggering events are most often related to career and family changes such as beginning a new job, becoming pregnant, or experiencing a divorce and re-marriage (p. 111).

While half of all marriages end in divorce, another half do not. Even though divorces occurred as often as 60% of the time with second or subsequent marriages, 40% of these subsequent marriages do not end in divorce. Since the breakup of marriages is more often associated with social and economic problems, a multitude of studies have explored the reasons marriages end in divorce. However, less attention has been devoted to marriages that remain successful throughout the partners' lives. Sociologists are only beginning to understand what makes marriages last and remain vital (Kitson, Benson-Babri, & Roach, 1985). There is even less understanding about successful, subsequent marriages and what couples are doing to make them work.

The purpose of this study was to describe what couples learned that contributed to the success of their subsequent marriages, and how they learned it. This dealt with both the content of what they learned and the process they used

to learn it. The study addressed the following research questions: (a) what did the couples learn that contributes to the success they are experiencing in their self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages? (b) how did the adults in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages learn these things that contributed to their successful marriages? (c) what are the initial learning strategy preferences of people who are in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages? (d) how does learning strategy preference contribute to learning in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages?

This study utilized a naturalistic design in order to collect and analyze qualitative data for the purpose of describing what the couples learned that contributed to the success of their successful, subsequent marriages and how they learned it. Because the study centered on the learning affecting the marriage, it was determined that the unit of analysis was the couple. Interviews were selected as the most appropriate format for collecting the information from the couples because there was a need to find out about feelings and situations which were not able to be observed. The researcher's husband participated in each interview as a participant observer. Twelve couples were interviewed. These couples were identified through a purposeful sample.

The couples included people who had been divorced once as well as people who had experienced two divorces prior to entering into their successful, subsequent marriages. They ranged in age from their forties through sixties with the exception of one couple that included the husband who is 75 and the wife who is 80. Eight of the couples had children whom they raised in their successful, subsequent marriages. The education level of the couples ranged from technical training beyond high school to individuals who had earned their doctoral degrees. Occupations included several teachers, professors, an attorney, a CPA, an engineer, higher education administrators, an insurance salesman, a bookkeeper, two ranchers, a non-profit administrator, and several individuals who had retired from their professions.

The interviews were conducted until the information provided by the couples became saturated. The interviews were tape recorded and the recordings were transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were thoroughly reviewed several times to determine common themes and then they were coded. The coded information that the couples revealed was organized into categories reflecting the themes. These themes or categories are the findings of the study. Three couples were interviewed again after the findings were determined for the purpose of completing member checks. The

researcher reviewed the findings of the study with these three couples who confirmed that the findings reflected their understanding of what they had learned and were doing in their self-identified, successful marriages. In addition, two peer reviews were completed. The findings were reviewed by fellow researchers, including faculty and doctoral students, and by a class of undergraduate students to confirm the viability of the findings. Both groups confirmed that the findings made sense and aligned with their knowledge of successful marriages and adult learning principles.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were presented as a metaphor of building a home. The themes or categories described by the couples were organized by the steps to building a home: Breaking Ground, Laying the Foundation, Testing for Solidity and Safety, Constructing the Framework: Building Relationships, and Making the House a Home. Each part of the home-building process reflected the couples' descriptions of their marriages and the learning they applied to them.

In Breaking Ground, the couples described how they completed a divorce recovery process. After their divorces, the couples spent time thinking about and analyzing what

happened to cause their divorces. They thought about what they had done as individuals to contribute to their divorces. Some couples experienced a physical divorce before they completed the mental divorce. Other participants found that they had completed a mental divorce long before the actual physical divorce occurred. The individuals in one of the couples had each married someone who was not a good person in that they were drug addicts and practiced other destructive habits. Rather than just lay blame on the person they married, each of these people took responsibility for their decisions and thought about why they had made such poor choices for mates with the goal of making better choices in the future.

In addition, these individuals worked on developing their self-identities. They thought about what was important to them, what they valued, and what they wanted out of life. Every couple utilized counseling in some way. Some of the individuals went to counseling during their first marriage while others participated in counseling after their divorces. A few went to counseling after they became a couple and consulted with counselors about their new marriages and their children.

Some of the individuals did their self-identity work while they were still in their first marriages. For

example, one person mentioned several times that when his dad died it had a major impact on him. This incident could be termed a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991). The disorienting dilemma led him to a spiritual journey in a search for more meaning in his life.

Whether the self-identity work occurred during their first marriages or after they experienced being divorced, the individuals worked on themselves and became more self-confident and self-evolved as people. They realized that they did not need to be married to someone to be whole.

Laying the Foundation: The Life Cycle involved the couples' descriptions of what prompted them to marry for the first time. The couples married for the first time because it seemed to be the expected "next step." They had completed high school, and some of them then completed college, and marriage seemed to be the next step they were supposed to complete as young adults. The couples married for the first time to meet societal norms. They married because everyone else was getting married or it was what they thought they were supposed to do. Others married because they wanted to have children or because everyone was getting married and then going off to war (World War II and Vietnam).

The couples married for the first time with very little

thought and little knowledge about who they were as people. They thought the person they were marrying would change or that things would be different after they married. Particularly during the decades of the forties through the sixties, life stage theories said that when a person was a young adult aged 18 to 30 their job was to select a mate, start a family, and get a job (Havighurst, 1956), and this is what the participants did.

In addition, the couples stated that now they were older they felt they were more relaxed in their attitudes toward their partners. They found that they were more tolerant of the small idiosyncracies of their partners now that they were older. This was different than what they experienced in their first marriages when they were younger when small annoyances were a much bigger problem for them. The couples also described having more realistic expectations of their partners now that they were older.

In Testing for Solidity and Safety, some of the participants described how they felt the need to test their new partners. This seemed to be because of the bad experiences in their first marriages, particularly with one of the women whose husband had left her suddenly with small children and one of the women who had experienced two divorces. These individuals wanted to check to make sure

their new partners were really going to be there for them and that they were actually the human beings they seemed to be. Some of the individuals found that they had to be very patient with their new partners and prove their reliability more than once. They had to build trust with their partners because of the earlier marital experiences.

Constructing the Framework: Building Relationships involves several topics related to building relationships: (a) Relationship-Enhancing Communication, (b) The Safe Room, or the Faith Foundation, and (c) Children. The couples learned how to communicate more directly, how to adopt different communication styles, and how to handle conflict in their successful marriages. They described how difficult communication was in their first marriages. They did not know how to surface disagreements and problem-solve when they had differences of opinion. They found it difficult to clear the air and said that when they never experienced conflict in their first marriages they thought that meant there was not any conflict.

In their subsequent marriages, the couples described having learned how to handle conflict and problem-solving in ways that worked for them. They said even though it was still difficult to talk through disagreements, they now knew how important it was to discuss disagreements and work

through them. They also talked about understanding that they had different communication styles, including differences based on gender. They described learning how to accept these differences and adopt different styles to enhance communication.

The couples learned that it was important to make time to spend with each other doing activities that encourage communication like cooking and eating a meal together, taking dance lessons together, or doing projects that provide them with new topics to discuss. During the interviews, the couples exhibited mutual respect and practiced active listening skills as they talked. For example, They took turns talking. They checked with each other frequently to see if they were reflecting what their partner thought or to give their partner a chance to describe their ideas and thoughts.

The couples found support or a safe room in their spiritual beliefs and their relationships with the church. Churches provided support for the women who were left with small children by their husbands. The churches and Bible study provided a place for couples to meet and get to know each other as friends. The churches provided a safe place and activities for families to spend time with others almost like an extended family. Their faith and spirituality

provided the couples with a shared direction that kept them on track.

Eight of the couples had children whom they raised in their new marriages. Dating was a package deal that included the children from the beginning. They found that the children did experience some difficulties when the divorce and re-marriages took place. However, the uncertainty of these situations for the children was addressed by the couples in the new marriages. They established rules and traditions for their new families. The families had dinner together every night without fail with no television so conversation could occur. They did not criticize their ex-spouses in front of the children. One of the stepfathers reached out to the boys' biological father to make him a part of their lives. Several of the stepparents became parental figures to the children. One stepmother spent a great deal of time helping her stepson learn things that had been neglected so he would be successful at school. He is now a successful college student and when he calls home and asks to speak to his mother, he is referring to his stepmother. The couples consulted with counselors who helped them learn how to relate to the children as stepparents and how to have the biological parent fill the disciplinarian role. The couples

made a success of their families, but it was not easy. The children experienced many difficulties especially at first and participated in counseling to help them with these challenges.

Making the House a Home results from experiencing zestful companionship. Zestful companionship involves many aspects of the couples' relationships including participating in a positive spiral, enjoying learning projects, having fun together, totally accepting each other, admiring each other, sharing responsibility and power in the marriage, and connecting and re-connecting.

The positive spiral means that the couples look for things they can do for each other. They compliment each other and speak to each other in positive, loving tones. They concentrate on the positive aspects of their marriages and each other instead of focusing on the small annoyances. This positive approach and doing good deeds for each other becomes a positive spiral within the relationships.

In addition, the couples spend time learning together and that can include taking classes, reading books together, participating in book clubs, going to school, or reading and studying before going on a trip. The couples took the ATLAS instrument to determine the learning strategies they adopt when they begin these learning projects. This exercise

provided an excellent ice-breaker with which to begin the interviews and helped the couples begin thinking about their marriages from a learning perspective. Both partners were Problem Solvers in three of the marriages, and both partners were Engagers in two of the marriages. The remaining seven couples had mixed learning strategies. Therefore, both individuals in the marriage having the same learning strategy did not appear to have an impact on the success of the marriages. There were only 3 Navigators among the group of 24 individuals. The couples were very cognizant of their learning strategies once they completed the ATLAS instrument. They were very articulate and could describe how they went about learning projects. They said the ATLAS learning strategies described them accurately.

The couples described being compatible as well as having complementary talents that lend themselves to being able to complete projects and have fun together. They felt totally accepted by their partners and did not feel judged by the person they married as they had in their previous marriages. Sharing the responsibility or the work in their marriages was a characteristic of their relationships. The couples said they divided the work based on what made sense, not on stereotypical gender roles, and divided it in ways that did not over-burden either partner. Power is shared in

these marriages. This includes making financial decisions that includes both of the individuals in the marriage. Finally, the couples describe the importance of connecting and re-connecting with each other by participating together in meaningful activities which is what their marriages are all about.

Summary of Findings

Divorce Recovery Process	• Inventory of prior marriage(s) • Self-identify work
Life Stage Development	• Prior marriages reflect early life development theories • Couples married to meet societal norms • Subsequent marriages benefitted from characteristics of later life stages
Tests	Dealt with trust issues from prior marriage(s)
Communication	• Learned conflict management skills • Aware of gender affect on communication • Adopted variety of communication styles • Created regular opportunities for communication to occur • Actively listened to partner • Attended to non-verbal cues for deeper understanding
Spiritual Foundation	Church: support for divorcing families; place for individuals to meet; extended family Shared spiritual beliefs keeps couples going in same direction
Children	• Stepfamilies can be successful • Stepparents earned trust of stepchildren • Discipline administered by biological parent • Stepfamilies established their own rules and traditions
Zestful Companionship	• Positive spiral • Admiration • Learning together • Total acceptance • Partnership • Connecting

The problem for this study was conceptualized around the two main areas of: what did the couples learn that contributed to the success of their subsequent marriages and

how did they learn it? Therefore, the conclusions are organized around these two concepts of the content of what they learned and the process by which they learned.

Before discussing the conclusions of this study it is important to mention an important caveat. This was a qualitative study with a small sample. Therefore, the conclusions outlined in this study apply only to the couples in this study. The people in the sample were very well educated with a majority of them having earned advanced degrees. In addition, the study was conducted in a region of the country that is referred to as the Bible belt.

One way of meeting tests of rigor in qualitative research is to verify its applicability or "fittingness" with a variety of different audiences in different settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). While the results of a scientific study may be checked for their ability to be generalized to the entire population, the findings of a qualitative study are more appropriately assessed by their "fittingness" or whether or not they fit the audience being addressed as well as other audiences (pp. 118-119).

Content

A history of unsuccessful relationships can be changed to successful relationships.

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriage moved from the unsuccessful, divorce track to the long-term, successful

marriage track.

The characteristics of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages are the same or similar to those who are in long-term successful marriages.

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages had a history of unsuccessful relationships. The individuals in one couple had each been divorced twice. Three of the couples included two husbands and one wife who had each been divorced twice. The remainder of the individuals in the study had experienced one divorce each. From this background of unsuccessful relationships, the couples changed their history of divorce to one of stable, successful marriages. Three couples have been married for over 20 years. The Spicer's have been married the longest at 27 years. Eleanor and Lance Green have celebrated their 22nd wedding anniversary, and the Pettigrews have been married for 21 years. Two couples, Anita and Jim Grandfork and Talia and Victor Wentz, have been married for 15 years. Cathy and John Carter have been married for 13 years. Eleven years of successful marriage have been celebrated by Sharon and Rob White and by Elizabeth and Preston Walters. Fred and Karen Hice and Mary Beth and Frank Taylor have been married to each other for 9 years, and Harry and Dana Kestner have been married 8 years. While there are certainly many couples who have been married

for many years but are not happy, these couples report being very happy in their subsequent marriages and are very pleased to have turned around their unsuccessful history of unsuccessful marriages and divorces.

The couples in the study changed from the unsuccessful, divorce track to the successful, long-term marriage track by learning to adopt the characteristics of successful, long-term marriages. In fact, the characteristics of the marriages of the couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages are the same or similar to the characteristics of long-term, successful marriages. Descriptions of long-term successful marriages contain the same concepts as the couples adopted in their successful, subsequent marriages, but sometimes different terminology is utilized. The basis of this information is derived from a study of long-term, successful marriages and a 25-year longitudinal study of individuals who had experienced divorce with many of whom have re-married. In addition, similar concepts and characteristics of successful marriages to those described by the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages are discussed in detail in books about building successful relationships. The study of couples in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages proposed to find out what the couples learned that they were

applying in their marriages. The couples' descriptions of what they learned are the characteristics of their marriages. These characteristics are also the characteristics of successful, long-term marriages as described in these studies and in the books on successful marriages.

Divorce Recovery Process

The couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages described completing a divorce recovery process that included taking stock of what happened in their first marriages and assessing the role they played in their divorces. They also spent time becoming more self-evolved and complete as individuals. Determining what was important to them and what they valued and thinking about their goals was part of the process. One of the husbands mentioned how important it was to complete a grief process when a marriage ends. He felt that this was something that was not talked about very often.

Completing a grief process and a divorce recovery process is mentioned in the literature. At the 10-year point of a 25-year longitudinal study of families experiencing divorce and remarriage, it was found that some individuals worked through a divorce recovery process and some did not (Blakeslee & Wallerstein, 1996). In a similar

fashion to the individuals in the study of self-identified, successful subsequent marriages, those who did complete this process took time to think about their marriages that ended in divorce to determine why the marriages failed. These individuals assessed their role in their divorces. They also worked on themselves, establishing a new sense of themselves and a new sense of identity. The Wallerstein (1996) study found that divorce can be a major catalyst for psychological, social, and economic changes. Some of the people used their divorce to review assumptions about why their marriages failed. They also used the time after divorce to begin to build a new self-image. They looked back to the roots of their lives before they were married to build new self-esteem (pp. 4-5).

Mourning the loss of the marriage is also discussed in the literature about marriage and divorce. It was found that the mourning process is often neglected by couples when a marriage ends. Even the most unhappy marriage contained hopes for a better life, companionship, love, and caring. While the lost marriage partner may not be missed, the symbolic meaning of the marriage has to be put to rest (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 279). Completing a mourning process helps the person be able to close the door on the marriage that has ended and move on. If this

grieving process is not completed, the marriage continues psychologically and the negative feelings associated with the separation continue to exist at their most hurtful level (pp. 9-10).

In a book about keeping a relationship once it has started, it is recommended that previous relationships be evaluated as to what went wrong, what the unmet expectations were, and what were the reasons for choices that were made (Hendrix, 1992). It is helpful to address old hurts and disagreements as well. Then the person can take the results of the evaluation and use them to decide what changes need to be made and where growth needs to occur (p. 29).

Building the Framework--Relationship-Enhancing Communication

The couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages described how important communication was in their marriages. They said they experienced difficulty with communication in their prior marriages. For example, they avoided conflict and did not know how to problem-solve. They didn't feel listened to and understood in their prior marriages. In their successful, subsequent marriages they reported being able to manage conflict in ways that worked for them. They learned to problem-solve together, to appreciate different communication styles in their partners including gender

differences, and to adopt different communication styles. They learned to participate in activities together that fostered communication.

A study of 50 couples in successful, long-term marriages of 40-50 years in length emphasized the importance of communication in marriage (Pearson, 1992). This study said that communication has an important impact on marital satisfaction. It is the vehicle that couples utilize to indicate interest in each other and state their love for each other. It is also the means by which a couple expresses disagreements with each other which can be difficult for couples (p. 7).

While they did not resolve conflict in the same ways, the happily married couples in this study were able to discuss their disagreement (Pearson, 1992). Married partners who are able to resolve their conflicts report high marital satisfaction. These couples also share the responsibility for conflict. Rather than point fingers at each other, they say "we" have a problem not "you" have a problem (pp. 154-155). Sharing the responsibility for the problem by using "I" in sentences instead of "you" is important for good communication (Parrott, 1995, p. 81).

The couples in this study said that they had learned to handle conflict in their self-identified, successful,

subsequent marriages. They knew it was important to be able to problem-solve, surface disagreements, and discuss them. Several couples said it was not particularly easy or comfortable for them to handle conflict but that they had learned how important it was to discuss disagreements. One couple spelled out in detail how they each describe their point of view and that this usually leads to each of them adjusting their viewpoint. They also said that sometimes they "agree to disagree."

Attempting to understand one's partner and demonstrating that understanding results in high satisfaction in successful marriages (Pearson, 1994). Through identification and empathy, marriage partners come to define themselves as a unit. Building such a partnership is not possible without understanding and support. Happily married people feel significantly more understood by their partners than unhappily married people. Building understanding between two people includes active listening and paying attention to a partner's nonverbal communication (p. 69). "Demonstrating understanding and support are the most important factors to a long and happy marriage, according to the couples in long, happy marriages" (p. 54). Empathy, the ability to view the world through another persons's eyes, is more difficult to experience and

demonstrate than respect. Nonetheless, research has shown that marital satisfaction is related to perspective taking and empathy (p. 55).

The couples in the successful, subsequent marriages said they experienced a deeper understanding of each other than in their previous marriages. The Spicers were able to accomplish this with their participation in Marriage Encounter. In Marriage Encounter, Ron Spicer said, "We learned a way of communicating on a deeper level, on a level of feelings." Jenna Spicer said that in Marriage Encounter they talked about marriage partners being real with each other and not wearing masks. This allows for a deep level of communication and understanding to occur. Jenna Spicer also mentioned how important active listening is in a relationship to provide full understanding. Anita Grandfork discussed the importance of paying attention to her husband's non-verbal cues. Being real with each other, the ability to talk on a deep level about feelings, paying attention to non-verbal communication, and listening actively are some of the ways the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages practice relationship-enhancing communication and enjoy a deeper level of understanding with each other than in their previous marriages. The characteristics of practicing

relationship-enhancing communication and a deeper level of understanding that the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages practiced are also characteristics of couples in long-term, successful marriages.

The Safe Room--A Faith Foundation

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages found a great deal of support with their participation in their churches. They also found that sharing a spiritual faith kept them going in the same direction and down the same path together. The couples in the study of successful subsequent marriages also said they were active in the church which provided activities and a "home base" for the families and their children. The church filled a role of an extended family for the children and their parents who were building their self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages.

Spiritual intimacy is a characteristic of long-term successful marriages (Parrott, 1995). This includes worshiping and praying together. Research shows that worshiping together increases a couple's chances of staying married for life. When researchers examined the characteristics of happy couples who had been married for more than two decades, one of the most important qualities

they found was faith in God and spiritual commitment. Religion provides couples with a shared sense of values, ideology, and purpose that bolsters their partnership (p. 137.) Thus, both the couples in the study and the literature point to a shared spirituality and the church as providing a firm foundation or safe room for their marriages.

Children

The period of the ending of a marriage was full of uncertainty for the couples experiencing the divorce and in particular for the children of these couples. The couples in the self-identified, successful marriages found that maintaining boundaries in the forms of rules and traditions for the children helped them thrive and grow into successful adults. Rules and traditions in the subsequent, successful marriages provided clarity and eliminated uncertainty for the members of the new family, particularly the children.

The traditions and rules provided boundaries for the children. These boundaries established parameters for the children within which they could operate with freedom. The boundaries meant that the children were freed from the uncertainties they had experienced during the turbulent times of the separations and divorces of their biological parents. The boundaries set by the parents in their newly

established families provided solid ground for the children so they could feel comfortable. The actions the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages took to make their new families comfortable on firm ground were important to their children who had experienced the divorce of their parents.

Children have a very difficult time for many years after their parents divorce (Blakeslee & Wallerstein, 1996). While the majority of these children grow into well-functioning adults, for many this did not occur until they were well into their thirties. When their parents divorced, it was as if the very basis of their lives was destroyed and their lives became unsettled and difficult. Divorce is a different experience for children than it is for adults. When divorce occurs, the family structure that is fundamental to child development is destroyed. This is likened to the scaffolding upon which children base their developmental stages from infancy to adolescence. When this structure collapses, the children's world is without supports. The children do not know that the resulting chaos is temporary (p. 11).

Many challenges are faced by stepparents as they begin new marriage (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002). It takes a great deal of time to make the transition into new roles as

the new adults in the children of their new spouses' lives. Generally, it works best for the biological parent to continue to be the principal parent, particularly when it comes to disciplining the child. The stepparent can help by providing support to the biological parent and by establishing a friendship with the child. Adults have to earn the trust and respect of a stepchild before the child can accept the authority as a parent. When adults are able to take things slowly and earn the respect of the stepchildren, the "transition to a working, happy and rewarding remarriage with children can work splendidly" (p. 182).

Regular routines, traditions, and rules that provide boundaries offer the new family both comfort and security. Being able to predict what will be happening in their home is especially important for children (Blakeslee & Wallerstein, 1996, p. 15)

The couples in the self-identified successful, subsequent marriages found that it was important to establish rules and traditions in their new homes. The stepparents were able to transition into their new roles by taking time to earn the respect of the stepchildren. By taking the advice of counselors, one family was careful to have the biological parent continue as the principle parent

while the stepparent took time to get to know the children and earn their respect. The stepparent in this family also provided support to the biological parent as the principle parent to her children. The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages are now able to enjoy the success of raising their stepchildren because enough time has passed for these families that they can see that their children are experiencing success as young adults by being successful college students and experiencing rewarding careers.

Zestful Companionship

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages exhibited characteristics and described activities that were rolled into the phrase zestful companionship. Zestful companionship includes the positive spiral of couples looking for good deeds to do for each other and maintaining a positive outlook, doing learning activities together that keep both individuals growing and provide new topics to talk about, having fun and enjoying activities together, totally accepting each other, admiring each other, sharing the power and responsibilities of the marriage, and connecting.

The literature on successful marriages describes many of these same concepts as being shared by successful

couples. However, they often use different vocabulary to describe the concepts, and they are frequently organized differently. Yet, they add up to the same ideas being applied in the successful, long-term marriages as in the successful, subsequent marriages in this study. Like the positive spiral experienced by the couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages, couples in long-term happy marriages describe the optimism and positive behaviors exhibited in their marriages (Pearson, 1992). They use warm voices toward each other, exchange frequent smiles, hugs, and compliments. "More satisfied couples use more frequent positive and effective interaction which leads to greater interaction" (p. 79).

Another word that could be used to describe the zestful companionship the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages experienced is "thriving." Couples who thrive also describe a positive focus in their marriages (Page, 1994). Thriving couples experienced a "willingness to focus on positive qualities. Couples who thrive focus on what they love about each other and their relationship and pay less attention to what they don't like" (p. 103).

Couples who thrive exhibit other characteristics that are the same characteristics as the couples experiencing

zestful companionship. Couples who thrive have a feeling of kindness and goodwill toward each other (Page 1994). They do good deeds for each other and emphasize the positive qualities of each other (p. 105). This is very similar to the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages who described a positive spiral composed of doing good deeds for each other and being positive with each other. During the interviews, these couples were observed treating each other with great respect like the couples who thrive.

Mutual tolerance, an attitude of gratitude, respect, trust, and the ability to give are characteristics of couples who thrive (Page, 1994). They also practice unconditional love as total acceptance. They do not put restrictions on their love for each other. They truly enjoy giving to each other and appreciate each other almost like they are a miracle they have found. They learned to look past the idiosyncracies of their partners and accept them for who they were (p. 106). Long-married, happy couples practice total acceptance like the couples who thrive and the couples in the self-identified, successful subsequent marriages.

Total acceptance is a characteristic of long-term, successful marriages and it is described in the literature

describing successful, long-term marriages. In addition, it is a characteristic described by the couples in the study of successful, subsequent marriages. Pearson (1994) described the unconditional love expressed by the couples she interviews for her study on long-term successful marriages.

> If people could only learn one lesson about lasting love, they would probably be best served by learning about unconditional acceptance, which is shown through understanding and support. Loving couples accept each other as they are. The language used to discuss this positive regard is referred to variously as respect, consideration, and unconditional love. Not only do they accept each other, they often come to appreciate the other person's idiosyncrasies" (p. 54).

Couples who thrive make being together a priority because they want to spend time together not because they are told it must be a priority (Page, 1994). Their relationship is central to their lives; it is not incidental. Even though they have busy lives, they spend high quality time together not because they think they are supposed to but because they want to; it is almost in an instinctive manner (p. 46).

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages emphasized spending time together whether it was in learning-type activities or activities that encouraged communication or projects. They also described having fun together and having talents that complemented each other. They also did not seem to have to

make spending time together a priority. It was something they enjoyed doing and seemed to do it naturally.

Couples who thrive play together and spend recreational time together (Page, 1994). They participate in a variety of activities together and share at least one interest (p. 54). The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages said they enjoyed going to the ballet and opera together, square dancing and performing in a band together, and participating in book clubs and taking classes together. In other words, these couples share interests and spend recreational time together in a similar manner as the couples who thrive.

In addition, couples who thrive practice relationship-development time, and couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages practice maintenance of their marriages. Couples who thrive pay attention to their relationships and take part in marriage strengthening activities such as Marriage Encounter and communications skill seminars, and they look for help if their marriages have any difficulty (Page, 1994). They spend time with a marriage counselor every so often if they feel the need (p. 61).

The couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages also continually work at

their marriages by paying attention and making time for each other. They do things together that provide opportunities for communication to take place. They participate in learning activities that provide the couples with new experiences and growth as well as new things about which to talk. They make spending time together a priority. They continue to work with therapists and counselors when they feel the need.

> We still see the therapist every now and then for a "tune-up." You get a little off track, and the tune-ups help. (Rob White)

These items add up to the couples working to maintain their successful marriages so they continue to be successful. Their new custom homes will require maintenance as well. Sometimes maintaining a relationship or successful marriage is referred to as "hard work." This brings to mind visions of people toiling away at something difficult and unenjoyable. Actually, it is meaningful work, and meaningful work brings enjoyment to adults.

The individuals in the couples who thrive are described as having the characteristic of "aliveness" (Page, 1994). This brings to mind the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages doing learning projects together which keeps them growing as individuals and as couples. Couples who thrive participate fully in life.

They fully live their lives with a full knowledge of themselves, and they live in the present moment. They connect with other people and thoroughly enjoy their lives together (p. 67). Couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages exhibit these characteristics of "aliveness" as well. With their dedication to learning activities and projects providing many opportunities for growth, and with their positive approach to each other and to life, they definitely exhibited an expanded capacity for pleasure like the couples who thrive.

Couples who thrive are able to coordinate things like how they utilize and decorate the space in their homes, accommodating different tastes in styles (Page, 1994). They strike a balance between meeting their own needs and those of their partners. They have a sense of fair play toward each other and divide up the responsibilities or the work around the house in ways that make sense and do not take advantage of either partner. They trust each other enough to share the power in their marriage as well including making money decisions jointly (p. 86).

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages practiced many of the same concepts outlined by Page (1994). They divided up the household

tasks in ways that make sense to them and they did it in such a way that neither partner felt overburdened. Similar to Page's couples who thrive, the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages, reported that they shared the decisions about spending money. They did not refer to these areas of their marriage as being related to boundaries the way the couples who thrive did but the concepts are very similar.

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages identified the characteristics of their marriages as the things that they had learned to make their marriages successful. These characteristics are similar to or the same as characteristics of long-term, successful marriages as described in several books and studies. The couples in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages described the process or how they learned to adopt the characteristics of successful, long-term marriages.

Process

> The self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages are grounded in effective learning, utilizing adult learning principles.

One of the questions that this study proposed to answer was how the couples learned what they learned. The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages

practiced many of the principles associated with adult learning. As a result, their successful marriages are grounded in effective learning.

Facilitating Self-Directed Learning

An important part of the body of work related to adult learning is Stephen Brookfield's principles of effective practice related to understanding and facilitating adult learning. While several of Brookfield's principles seem to most directly apply to formal learning situations that involve adults, there are also some applications to informal learning activities that involve the learner's personal needs, and these fit well with the learning experiences described by the couples in this study.

Brookfield's (1986) first principle is that participation in learning is voluntary; adults engage in learning as a result of their own volition (p. 9). It may be that the circumstances prompting this learning are external to the learner, for example, job loss, divorce, and bereavement, but the decision to learn is the learner's (p. 10). In the case of the participants in this study, each of them chose to learn what had happened in their first marriages that ended in divorce. They chose to spend time thinking about what they had done to contribute to their divorces and to learn new ways of participating in a long

term relationship.

> Bit by bit you have to answer all the questions about your previous marriage and all the ins and outs of it. It was the absolutely most important thing to look internally about why you chose what you chose and what all of that meant. You have to look at why the previous relationship didn't work. Not in a blaming effort. To look at yourself. (Preston Walters)

Sometimes the learning activity the couples participated in was a formal learning activity such as Marriage Encounter Workshops or the annulment process of the Catholic church, or perhaps there was a decision to work on a graduate degree. Whatever the choice of learning activity, formal or informal, participation in that activity was purely voluntary on their part.

> We didn't go to Marriage Encounter because our marriage was in trouble. It was to enhance it. We thought we might learn something. (Ron Spicer)

The second principle of effective practice is that it is characterized by a respect among participants for each other's self-worth (Brookfield, 1986, p. 10). The researcher observed that when the partners in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages were interviewed, they treated each other with great respect. They were careful to take conversational turns with each other. They made respectful requests to each other in conversation. Another indication of the respect they had

for each other was that they were partners in their marriages with the power being shared and the work being divided so that neither individual felt over-burdened.

Facilitation is collaborative, and facilitators and learners are engaged in a cooperative enterprise is another principle of effective practice in facilitating learning in adults (Brookfield, 1986, p. 10). The couples in this study were self-directed in their learning activities, but they also consulted with facilitators such as counselors and therapists for assistance with their learning processes. Typically, counselors work in a collaborative manner with their clients. The participants in the study worked with counselors throughout the process of their divorces and re-marriages. The choice to work with a councilor or therapist was voluntary on the part of the participants, and they said that they found this process very helpful to them.

> I think it's a good idea to get some type of help such as a counselor when there's a divorce. (Sharon White)

Praxis is at the center of effective facilitation (Brookfield, 1986).

> Learners and facilitators are involved in a continual process of activity, reflection upon activity, collaborative analysis of activity, new activity, further reflection and collaborative analysis, and so on. "Activity" can, of course include cognitive activity; learning does not always require participants to "do" something in the sense of performing clearly observable acts.

> Exploring a wholly new way of interpreting one's work, personal relationships, or political allegiances would be an example of activity in this sense. (Brookfield, 1986, p. 10)

The individuals in the couples in this study practiced cognitive activity, reflection upon activity, collaborative analysis of activity, new activity, further reflection, and collaborative analysis. The Spicers practiced this process when they participated in their Marriage Encounter week-ends in which they had to write about a topic, discuss it, and then discussed it with their team leaders or their marriage encounter week-end participants. The Winters practiced this process when they participated in the Catholic Church's annulment process. They wrote their thoughts about the questions being asked, discussed them with each other, and then discussed them further with the priest. This process helped them find new perspectives that they were able to apply in their marriages.

> A lot of people who saw us before and after the first Marriage Encounter said we were so different when we came back. The kids noticed. We were communicating in a different way. (Jenna Spicer)

"Facilitation fosters a spirit of critical reflection in adults" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 10). The adults in the study of self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages engaged in critical reflection throughout the process as their first marriages ended, they evaluated what happened

and they thought about what they did to contribute to their divorces.

> When I left the marriage, I don't know if it was soul searching or what. I knew I needed to do something different with my life. (Victor Ward)

> I had done everything I could to make that marriage work. I had analyzed why it didn't work. Once I figured that out too, that helped me with the mental divorce. I knew I wasn't going to do those things again. (Talia Ward)

The couples practiced critical reflection when they evaluated the communication processes they utilized in their first marriages and then changed the way they communicated with their partners in their subsequent marriages. The couples used critical reflection when they determined that they wanted their subsequent marriages to be based in partnership, by sharing responsibilities, by practicing total acceptance of each other, and by developing their approach to raising their children in their blended families, along with the other characteristics of their marriages described in this study.

Finally, the goal of facilitation is the nurturing of self-directed, empowered adult (Brookfield, 1986). "Such adults see themselves as proactive, initiating individuals engaged in a continuous re-creation of their personal relationships, work worlds, and social circumstances rather than as reactive individuals, buffeted by uncontrollable

forces of circumstance" (p. 11). The individuals in this study married for the first time because it was the socially acceptable "next step" in their lives back in the 1940s through the 1960s. In other words, they reacted to the circumstances of the society they lived in at the time as though they were "buffeted by uncontrollable forces of circumstance."

> My first husband and I were in college together. We traveled in a group of friends. They all got married at the same time and had children at the same time. I realized I got married for everyone else. (Anita Grandfork)

> At the time I got married for the first time, it was World War II and everyone was getting married and then the husbands were going off to war. So we got married. (Carol Pettigrew)

However, as a result of their learning activities, critical reflection, and the resulting growth, they became proactive individuals who went on to participate in new marriages of their own design.

Real-Life Learning

The couples in this study also practiced real-life learning principles. Real-life learning is the ability to learn on a recurring basis in every-day, real-world circumstances and requires comprehension of such "personal factors as the learner's background, language and culture" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 25). Significant differences exist between real-life problems and problems found in

formal education (Fellenz & Conti, 1989; Sternberg, 1990). In real life, learners have to realize a problem exists and then define the problem. In formal education, problems or issues are defined by instructors (Sternberg, 1990, p. 35).

The individuals in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages realized they needed to work on some problems sometime during the divorce process. The nature of the divorce recovery process was that the individuals realized that problems existed, spent time figuring out what those problems were, and went to work on them. The nature of the problems varied depending on the person. Real-life problems are unstructured, relate directly to the learners' lives, and have multiple answers which are unlike the structured, out-of-context, single-answer problems of formal education (Fellenz & Conti, 1993, pp. 37-39). Unlike the accessibility and definiteness of test answers, answers to real-life problems are often elusive (p. 39). The couples accessed various resources, processes, and experienced different journeys to reach the "answers" to their real-life problems. In the end, they did not talk about "answers" to their real-life problems. They talked about changes they had made and new ways of thinking and doing things to enhance their relationships. Broad terms were utilized to describe what they were doing in their successful marriages,

not specific words like "answers."

Learners in academic settings are rarely challenged to question their beliefs, and the feedback they receive is distinct and immediate while real-life learners exercise the power of disconfirmation and often receive feedback in a muddled, untimely, and undesirable fashion (Fellenz & Conti, 1993, pp. 39-40). Several of the couples mentioned that they had learned what they did not want in a marriage partner from their first marriage. The couples had definitely questioned their beliefs that they had when they married for the first time and revised them to fit their new lives or to make their new lives.

Real-life problems are rarely solved individually unlike the individual problem-solving focus of traditional educational settings (Fellenz & Conti, 1993, p. 40). All of the couples worked with counselors at one point or another in the process of completing the divorce recovery process and beginning their new marriages. They also received assistance in their learning processes from the church and from groups like Marriage Encounter.

"The real-life learning tasks of adults are distinct for each individual, seldom follow a clear pattern, defy measurement, and often are so episodic in nature that beginnings, patterns, and outcomes are impossible to define"

(Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 4). The couples and the individuals in the couples each had their own learning process that they utilized as they journeyed through their divorces and re-marriages. While they all accessed counseling, they worked with a counselor at different stages of the process. Sometimes they worked individually with a counselor when they were divorced, others consulted with counselors once they were a couple. Still others worked with a therapist to help with their new family situation which included kids from two different families. It is difficult to say when each of the couples began their learning tasks or to describe a specific pattern that they followed. Even the outcomes are different because what one couple has determined works for them in their marriage, in terms of exact tasks such as conflict resolution, another couple might find would not work at all for them.

Critical Reflection

The couples utilized critical thinking or critical reflection throughout the divorce and remarriage process. Critical thinking consists of five commonly experienced phases (Brookfield, 1987). A trigger event occurs first or "some unexpected happening that prompts a sense of inner discomfort and perplexity." The next stage, appraisal, captures several of the steps in Mezirow's transformational

process including a self-examination of the situation, "brooding" about the discomfort, and finding others who are experiencing a similar problem. In the third phase of exploration, new and different ways of explaining or accommodating the experience that has led to the discomfort are examined. The fourth phase is one of developing alternative perspectives. Basically a new role or a new way of behaving is tried. A new way of thinking about the problem or experience is developed and at the same time, confidence is gained in the new perspective. New ways of thinking or living are integrated into the person's life (p. 27).

The couples described spending time thinking and taking inventory of what happened in their first marriages. They discussed why they married in the first place, what went wrong, and what they contributed to the ending of their marriages. Their reflection led to their formulating ideas about what they did not want in a marital partner. They worked on themselves and figured out what was important to them and what they valued, and they set goals for themselves.

> After I started reading the Word, I started picking out the most important things in life. (Victor Wentz)

> When we married, I knew what I wasn't looking for. (Talia Wentz)

When the couples began exploring the idea of getting married, they talked at length about what their married life would be like. They decided to do things differently than they had in their first marriage. All of this thinking, discussing, inventorying, planning, and making changes constitutes critical thinking and reflection.

Critical thinking or critical reflection is a part of Mezirow's theory of transformational learning or perspective transformation (Merriam & Clark, 1999). As an individual encounters a new situation or change in a life situation such as divorce, or what Mezirow termed a disorienting dilemma, it is filtered through an individual's meaning perspective so it can be interpreted. Generally, new information is easily integrated into a person's system of values and learning experiences, serving to complement or expand one's world view.

However, when new knowledge is contradictory to one's system of values and learning experiences, the person is faced with a dilemma and choice to either re-examine and/or adjust previously established values and learning experiences to accommodate the new information or to reject the new knowledge. If a person chooses to re-examine existing values and learning experiences, the dilemma of new information triggers the transformational process, resulting

in changes to one's perspective (pp. 319-323).

Most of the participants experienced their divorce as a disorienting dilemma that led to a transformational process that resulted in transforming their perspective. One of the participants mentioned several times during the interview that his dad died. After that he would say he realized his life lacked meaning or that he was concerned about what he was teaching his son about how to live life. It seemed that this event in his life may have been a disorienting dilemma that led him to question his meaning perspectives. Indeed, he went in search for more spiritual meaning in his life after his dad died.

> At the time of my father's death, I knew that I had to come to grips with the fact that my life was very hollow and had very little meaning. That was the beginning of realizing something was missing. (Jim Grandfork)

This was the most clear-cut example in the study of someone experiencing the transformational learning process. However, all of the participants examined their traditional beliefs when they experienced their divorces. They "became critically aware of how and why their assumptions had come to constrain the way they perceived and understood their worlds and then went about changing those structures into a more inclusive and integrative perspective (Mezirow, 1991). Then they made choices and acted upon their new

understandings" (p. 167). Mezirow's description of perspective transformation fits nicely with the process the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages experienced.

Metacognition

Metacognition is "the ability to think about thinking, to be consciously aware of oneself as a problem solver, and to monitor and control one's mental processing" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). "Metacognition is often viewed as the highest level of mental activity and is especially needed for complex problem solving" (p. 206). Metacognition includes being aware of one's learning style, being able to adapt to and utilize other learning styles when necessary (Fellenz & Conti 1993). This also involves being cognizant of one's learning strategy and the ability to adjust depending on the situation and adopt other learning strategies (p. 2).

The individuals in the study of self-identified, successful marriages utilized metacognition in that they were aware of their learning activities and how they were going about experiencing their learning. This is the idea behind determining individual learning strategies utilizing the ATLAS instrument. It helps learners determine their initial approach to a learning project. Each of the

individuals in the study took the ATLAS instrument. Every one of them felt that the description of their learning strategy fit them. As a result, they were very aware of how they went about learning, and they were able to converse about it during the interviews in an articulate manner.

> I learned there is no separation between life experiences and learning. It is a vital thing that I learned. I am re-learning that all the time. Learning is choices. Learning about life is choices. (Anita Grandfork)

> We learned by doing lots of thinking. (Dan Brown)

> I was in a learning mode. (Victor Wentz)

> Growth and learning is scary, but there is an excitement about it too. (Jim Grandfork)

The majority of the individuals in the study were Problem Solvers, and an almost equal number were Engagers. Only three of them were Navigators. There were no couples in the study in which each person in the couple was a Navigator. Yet, there were three Problem Solver couples and two Engager couples. This might be because Problem Solvers tend to generate alternatives. They use a trial-and-error approach, but they do not look at mistakes as errors. They look at them as learning opportunities. Problem Solvers use an approach to learning that includes knowing that there is not just one way to look at or to do something. They keep trying, and if one way does not work, they will try another. This fits in well in this study of self-identified,

successful, marriages in which the individuals in the couples did not give up on marriage with their first and sometimes even second failed marriage, and they were willing to try new ways of thinking and behaving in their successful, subsequent marriages.

It makes sense that there are so many Engagers in this study. Engagers are relationship builders, and they value relationships. They look at life with a relational approach. This study of self-identified, successful marriages was about building relationships. In addition, building relationships involves not only cognitive thinking skills, but it also involves the emotional, feeling side of critical thinking or the affective domain. This is the domain from which Engagers generally operate. Also, Engagers and Problem Solvers tend to utilize support groups or consult with experts to get assistance like the couples in this study did. Therefore, it is appropriate that there would be many Engagers in the sample.

Navigators tend to operate from the cognitive domain. They tend to work on projects alone rather than consulting experts or support groups. They have a very linear, logical approach to their learning. They also tend to look at trial-and-error as a mistake rather than as a tool for learning. Navigators tend to lay out a plan and stick with the plan so

it may be that the Navigators are staying in long first marriages and are not getting divorced and remarried. Therefore, Navigators may not been available for the study because they are in long term original marriages, and they are not getting divorced and remarried.

Despite the fact that there were only a few Navigators in the sample, there was no evidence that learning strategy preference impacted the success of the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages. The marriages were successful whether the individuals in the couples were Problem Solvers, Engagers, or Navigators. What was important about the couples' learning strategies was that they were aware of their learning methods and were able to clearly articulate them. The discussion during the interviews about the learning strategies identified by administering ATLAS helped the couples look at their marriages from a learning point of view. Ultimately, these couples were learners and their marriages benefitted from their being self-directed, critically reflecting, and metacognitively-skilled learners.

Learning-How-to-Learn

While the concept of learning-how-to-learn appears to apply most appropriately to formal learning activities, some of the processes described within the learning-how-to-learn

idea do have an application to the learning that couples in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages experienced. Learning-how-to-learn can apply to determining what the learner needs to know with one example being self-knowledge (Smith, 1982, p. 17). Pursuit of self-knowledge was key to the divorce recovery process that the couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages completed. They spent time figuring out who they were as individuals, what was important to them, and what goals they wanted to pursue. Being self-aware and knowledgeable about themselves is a key part of being able to communicate and find a deeper level of understanding with their partners.

Andragogy

The couples in the self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages utilized the key concepts of Knowles' andragogical model. This learner-centered philosophy focuses on adults and is considered to be a set of assumptions about learners (Knowles, 1980). As the couples worked through the divorce recovery process, changed how they approached communication with their partners, and made decisions about how to parent their children in their new marriages, they exhibited all six of the assumptions of Knowles' andragogical model. They were self-directed learners who determined for themselves what they needed to

learn so they could participate in successful subsequent marriages. They utilized their experiences from their first marriages to determine what type of changes they wanted to make in themselves. Their experiences helped them know at the very least what they did not want in a mate and in many cases what type of person they wanted in a subsequent partner. Their learning took place when they were ready to learn. Typically, this was after their divorces took place but sometimes it was while they were still married to their first spouses. They were oriented to learning knowledge they could immediately apply to achieve their full potential in life, more specifically, in their marriages (pp. 43-44). Their learning was definitely problem-centered. The problem of experiencing an unsuccessful marriage provided an impetus for learning more about themselves and learning to do things differently in their subsequent marriages. Finally, these adults were motivated to learn by internal motivators such as gaining self-confidence and wanting a better life for themselves and for their families (p. 5).

Developmental life stage theories entered into this study along with Brookfield's critical thinking model, Mezirow's transformational learning theory, metacognition, and learning strategies. The couples in the study described the reasons they married for the first time. Without fail,

their first marriages were entered into without critical thinking and because the individuals were meeting societal norms based on the developmental life stage of the time. The individuals in the study married for the first time in the 1940s through the late 1960s. During that time, the defining task of the late teens and early twenties was to move into the adult world and become accepted on its terms (Levinson, 1978). For men in American culture, this meant getting a job, establishing a household, and developing a sense of competence (Havighurst, 1952). Finding a mate was considered to be the primary responsibility of a young man moving from adolescence to adulthood (Havighurst, 1952). The median age for marriage of American women in the United States during those decades was 19 or 20 (Havighurst & Moorefield, 1964, pp. 160-171). Women during this era were expected to get married, if not right after high school graduation, then certainly during college or as soon as they graduated from college. During this time, one of the principal psychosocial tasks of life was that of intimacy -- learning to share life with the greatest intimacy with another person and this was the central task of early adulthood (Erikson, 1950). The couples who entered into marriage during the era of the 1940s through 1960s were very young, and they gave this major decision in life very little

thought because it was the societal norm.

Summary

The couples in this study married because it was expected by their families, friends, and by the society in which they lived. Getting married was what their parents and grandparents had done when they were in their late teens and early twenties. The couples got married because their friends were all getting married. They felt like it was the "next thing" they were supposed to do after completing high school or college. During the time period of the 1940s through the 1960s in the United States, getting married was what people did when they completed high school or college. Also during this time, tract homes were being built in large quantities to accommodate the veterans returning from World War II and their new families. The tract homes were all built alike and looked the same, reflecting the building processes used to complete so many new homes at one time. To frame this phenomenon within the house-building metaphor, the couples married as young people with little thought or planning as to their individual needs and tried to fit their married lives into the tract house model.

After marrying at a young age and with little thought, the couples' marriages ended in divorce. For many of these couples, divorce did not fit into their ideas of themselves

or into the meaning schemes that had developed over time. For the individuals in these couples, divorce was a disorienting dilemma that propelled them into a critical reflection mode. This included completing an appraisal of their lives and themselves. They utilized metacognition and critical thinking skills to evaluate what went wrong with their first marriages and to figure out who they were, what they wanted out of life, and to re-define their core beliefs. The couples in this study were learners. Therefore, in the final analysis, this is a study about learning. Adult learning principles such as Knowles' andragogical model, self-directed learning and transformational learning were utilized by the couples as they transformed their lives from experiencing unsuccessful relationships to enjoying successful relationships.

When they entered their subsequent marriages, these couples utilized their critical thinking skills to work together to build their marriages based on their new visions of themselves and on what worked for them not on societal norms. Together, the couples outlined what was important to them. For example, they had learned from their experiences in their prior marriages, how important effective communication was to a healthy marriage. Handling conflicts constructively and openly was a priority even when it was

uncomfortable for them. They implemented a variety of communication styles in their new marriages. Responsibilities and power in their marriages was organized based on what would work best for them, not on stereotypical gender roles. By and critically reflecting and consciously planning the couples set ground rules and began traditions in their new families so their children could feel comfortable and grow to be successful young adults.

After evaluating the experiences in their previous marriages, they learned how to treat their partners with kindness, total acceptance, and they created a positive spiral of good deeds within their new marriages. The couples shared their spiritual faith and found a safe place in the church where they could build relationships with others and nurture their marriages. After one and sometimes two false starts, the couples transformed their lives from experiencing unhappy relationships to enjoying zestful companionship with their partners.

To utilize the metaphor of building a house, rather than moving into the standardized tract house that typified their prior marriages, the couples in this study designed and built their custom houses to fit needs both as individuals and as couples. Then they made their custom built houses into homes by developing new traditions and

rules that worked for their families, by making memories along the way, and by living a life of zestful companionship as a couple.

Contributions to Theory

The purpose of this study was to determine what couples in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages learned and how they learned it. Theories of adult learning along with theories of key elements of successful marriages were studied and it was found that the adults in this study utilized adult learning principles and were able to adopt the key elements of successful marriages in their subsequent marriages. The results of the study add to adult learning theory by demonstrating that adult learning principles were useful, at least to the adults in this study, in learning how to adopt the characteristics of successful marriages. In addition, the study demonstrated that the 12 couples interviewed were able to adopt the characteristics of successful marriages. This adds to theories about successful marriages in that the 12 couples in this study who had previously experienced unsuccessful marriages were able to build successful subsequent marriages that included the characteristics of the long-term successful marriages described in the literature.

Discussion and Recommendations

There is tremendous interest in the subject of how to heave healthy relationships and successful marriages. An example of this is demonstrated by the attendance at a recent seminar on elements of successful marriages. An OSU professor from the College of Human Environmental Sciences facilitated two seminars this past summer on the elements of successful marriage. One seminar was for couples who were already married and the other was for couples who were not yet married. Each of these seminars was attended by over 50 people. The response was so positive that the professor plans to hold two more seminars during the Fall 2003 semester.

Another example of the high level of interest in topics related to marriage lies in a Communication in Marriage course taught by the researcher this past spring as part of the Speech Communications curriculum at NSU's Broken Arrow campus. So many students enrolled in the one credit class, that two classes had to be formed. While this may have been because of the popularity of one credit classes for graduating seniors, the students exhibited great interest in the subjects being covered. The course objectives and material taught for this class were based on the findings of this research study.

The students participated so enthusiastically in the

discussions that the teacher simply utilized facilitating skills to assure that everyone had an opportunity to express their ideas and that the course objectives were met. Many of the students' parents were divorced and they were intimately aware of the impact this had on their lives. They wanted to avoid experiencing divorce themselves but were not sure how to do this. Two students in the class were in their 40s and reported that they were experiencing successful, subsequent marriages. They provided the other students with their insights about what they had learned.

Adult learning principles provided the basis for the format of the class. The room was arranged in pods for the larger of the two classes so the students sat in groups the entire time. The students in the smaller of the two classes sat in a circle. This room arrangement facilitated the group activities and discussions the students participated in during the class sessions. The students prepared table tents with their first names on both sides which made it easy for them to call each other by their first names.

The students organized an agenda that included what they wanted to learn from the class during the first class session. The students' learning objectives closely coincided with those outlined by the teacher prior to the class but the students did express interest in additional

topics that the teacher had not originated. The teacher referred to the student-generated agenda during the class sessions to assure that the students' learning goals were being met.

The students took breaks about every hour and a half. Dinner was provided by the facilitator the first night of class and the next day the students brought breakfast and lunch for everyone to share. This very quickly relaxed the students so they felt comfortable and ready to learn.

When the class ended, the students said that there was a need for more classes on the topic of successful marriage and communication. The format of this class with its basis in adult learning principles is recommended for classes on topics such as building successful marriages so the participants can learn as much as possible in a setting and atmosphere in which they can feel comfortable thereby encouraging active participation in the learning experience. With so much interest in the topic of building successful relationships and marriages, there is a need to provide this information to different audiences in a variety of settings. The information from the study on successful, subsequent marriages should be presented in an adult-friendly manner with the subject matter being the findings of this study in various settings with a variety of audiences.

Therefore, it is recommended that the information provided by the couples in this study be disseminated to audiences in settings such as educational institutions, government and court systems, and in church-based adult education programs.

Educational Institutions

> Curriculum about characteristics of successful marriage should be developed and provided to students by no later than their mid-teen years.

While pre-marital counseling is certainly worthwhile, by the time a couple is committed to getting married, their focus tends to be planning the wedding and not on learning how to have a successful marriage. Therefore, it is recommended that by no later than students' mid-teen years, during the transition time from adolescence to adulthood, classes on successful marriage take place. Topics should include developing self-esteem, choosing a life partner, communication, conflict resolution, budgeting, and other related topics need to be developed and taught. Couples who are in successful marriages as well as couples who have experienced divorce and subsequent, successful marriages could be guest speakers. They could provide real-life stories and examples about what they learned that they are applying in their successful marriages and how they learned it.

The Court System

> The court system needs to focus their court-ordered educational programs on people who have experienced divorce by providing workshops on how to learn to adopt the characteristics of successful marriages.

Since people who have experienced divorce are probably going to get married again and it is known that they have the potential of learning the characteristics of successful, long-term marriage, it will be important to provide this information to them before they marry again. One way to reach individuals who have experienced divorce is through the court system.

Oklahoma already has a law that requires people with children who are getting divorced to participate in a divorce workshop. The divorce workshop helps the parents understand the impact their divorce has on their children. It provides information about child development so the parents can assess if their children are experiencing normal child development issues or more serious problems as a result of their parents' divorce. In addition, parents learn how crucial it is for the well-being of their children to co-parent their children even though they are divorcing. The key elements of co-parenting are taught. The importance of resolving differences in constructive ways and not using the children as pawns in power struggles in stressed.

While this workshop for divorcing parents provided important information is needed, the format when the researcher participated in the program, was not organized around adult learning principles. For example, the adult participants sat in rows like they did in elementary school. The instructors introduced themselves but the participants were not invited to introduce themselves. There were no warm-up or get-acquainted activities, nor were there any table tents with peoples' names on them. The workshop lasted several hours but there were no breaks. The workshop leaders imparted the information in a lecture format. When questions were invited, no one asked questions. The atmosphere in the room was too strained. Some of the tension in the room was no doubt because all of the participants were at various stages of the divorce process and they were required to attend. However, the learning experience would have been enhanced by utilizing adult learning principles to enhance the method of delivering the information.

Government Agencies

> The Oklahoma Marriage Initiative Project should disseminate information about the learning couples in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages are applying in their marriages to Oklahomans.

The Oklahoma Marriage Initiative Project could use its

website and media releases to provide information about successful, subsequent marriages to the citizens of Oklahoma. Oklahoma has one of the highest divorce rates in the nation which is why former Governor Frank Keating began the marriage initiative program. While the purpose of the marriage initiative was to preserve the union of marriage, meaning original marriages, the fact is some marriages should not be continued. This includes marriages where there is physical violence or those which are so dysfunctional that they are harmful to the participants and any children involved. If people in these marriages were able to learn how to change their lives the way the couples in the study of self-identified, subsequent marriages did, this would serve to decrease the high divorce rate experienced by Oklahomans.

Church-Based Adult Education Programs

> Adult education agencies such as churches and community based agencies should also present information on learning to adopt the characteristics of successful, long-term marriages.

Currently, local churches offer divorce workshops and some minister to people who are divorced. Information about couples learning to adopt characteristics of successful, long-term marriages could be provided through workshops at these churches and other adult education agencies. The

workshops could be combined with counseling and mentoring. Adult learning principles should be applied to the planning and delivery of the workshops to optimize the positive outcome for the adults who participate.

> Marriage counselors, particularly ministerial counselors, need to be trained on how to counsel couples who are getting married after experiencing a prior marriage.

Ministers who counsel couples prior to their getting married appear to base their counseling on the traditional experience of a young couple getting married for the first time. This was the experience of the researcher when getting married for the second time. It was also the experience of two colleagues who are getting married this summer, both for the second time. The ministers' counseling was not appropriate to the ages or life experience of these couples. It focused on the needs of a more traditional, young couple facing the task of breaking from their family of origin, not on the needs of a couple beginning a subsequent marriages with the need to complete a divorce recovery process. These are the experiences that lead to this recommendation of providing training for ministers and other pre-marital counselors so they can assist couples beginning subsequent marriages with issues relevant to their needs.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This study found that 12 couples in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages were learners. They were self-directed learners who utilized critical reflection and experienced transformational learning. These couples also outlined the key elements of their marriages. They discussed what they had learned that they were applying in their successful, subsequent marriages. It has been mentioned that the 12 couples who were interviewed were well educated. Over half of the individuals in the couples have earned advanced degrees. Therefore, it might be worthwhile for a future study on self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages to focus on people who have different educational levels. In addition, the couples in this study benefitted from being older. They ranged in age from their 40s to their 70s. They discussed benefiting from being older in their subsequent marriages in that they were more relaxed with each other and less concerned about little idiosyncracies like they were when they were young. This was supported by the theory of sex role crossover (Pearson, 1994; Rybash, Roodin, & Hoyer, 195). Sex role crossover is the notion that people change sex roles as they age. Men become more nurturing and women become more direct, assertive, and pursue careers at an older age. The men and women in this study evidenced this sex role crossover in the

changes they made in how they communicated with each other. Therefore it is recommended that a future study involve couples in subsequent, successful marriages who are younger in age than the couples in this study.

Another area for future study would be to investigate what couples in unsuccessful, subsequent marriages learned or did not learn from their experiences.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Describe purpose of the study.
Address confidentiality issues.
Ask about audio-taping the interview.
LEARNING STRATEGY IDENTIFICATON AND DISCUSSION
Describe ATLAS and administer the instrument.
Facilitate discussion about their learning strategies.
Does their learning strategy preference fit?
Does the learning strategy preference of their spouse seem to fit?
What kinds of learning activities do you participate in?
Are these activities that you do individually or together?
How do these learning activities impact your marriage?
What do you do for fun?
GETTING ACQUAINTED
How did you two meet?
What led to your decision to get married?
What kinds of things did you talk about when you discussed getting married?
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES
How do you arrange your family finances?
Describe how you handle the work responsibilities of the marriage. Examples, housework, yard work, cooking.
How would you depict the power arrangement in your marriage?
Describe a conflict you have experienced and how you handled it.
Follow-up question: What are some other areas you could discuss related to communication in your marriage and how that works?
For each of these questions, ask about how they learned this or how did they decide to arrange things this way or do things this way.
CHILDREN
Do you have children that you raised in this marriage?
What were some of the challenges you handled related to parenting your children in your marriage?
DIFFERENCES IN THIS MARRIAGE
What is different about this marriage compared with your previous marriage(s)?
ADVICE
What advice would you give a couple with previous marriages before they marry?
CLEAN-UP QUESTION
Is there anything else you would like to discuss about your marriage that has not been covered.
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Ages
Educational level attained

Occupation
Children and ages
Length and number of prior marriages
Number of years in current marriage.

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 9/16/2003

Date: Tuesday, September 17, 2002 IRB Application No ED0318

Proposal Title: ADULT LEARNING IN SELF-IDENTIFIED, SUCCESSFUL, SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGES

Principal Investigator(s):

Jane Varnecky
3525 S. Urbana
Tulsa, OK 74135

Gary Conti
206 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

B. Jane H. Varmecky

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: ADULT LEARNING IN SELF-IDENTIFIED, SUCCESSFUL SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGES

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Mason High School, Mason, Michigan, June 1968; received Bachelor of Arts Degree in Speech Communications from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, May 1996; received Master of Human Relations degree from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, May 1999. Began doctoral work August 1999. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2003.

Experience: Director of Community Relations, University Center at Tulsa, 1991-1996; Director of Continuing Education, Rogers State University, 1997-1999; Director of Continuing Education, Oklahoma State University-Tulsa, 1999-2001. Coordinator of Graduate Student Services, Oklahoma State University-Tulsa, 2001-present; Adjunct Instructor of Speech Communications, Northeastern State University, 2000-present.

Professional Memberships: Oklahoma Association of Academic Advisors, National Association of Academic Advisors, American Association of Adult and Continuing Education.